THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

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WIRELESS AND EMPIRE AMBITION

Wireless telegraphy/telephony and radio broadcasting in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, South-West Pacific (1914-1947): political, social and developmental perspectives

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Abstract

This thesis explores the establishment of wireless technology (telegraphy, telephony and broadcasting) in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP), South-West Pacific and analyses its application as a political, social and cultural tool during the colonial years spanning the first half of the 20th century.

While wireless seemed a ready-made technology for the Pacific, given its capability as a medium to transmit and receive signals instantly across vast expanses of ocean, the colonial civil servants of Britain's Fiji-based regional headquarters, the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) in Suva, were slow to understand its strategic value. Conservative attitudes to governance, combined with a confidence born of Imperial rule, not to mention bureaucratic inertia and an almost complete lack of understanding of the new medium by a reluctant administration, aligned to cause obfuscation, delay and frustration.

In the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, one of the most geographically remote 'fragments of Empire', pressures from the commercial sector (primarily planters and traders), the religious community (mission stations in remote locations), keen amateur experimenters (expatriate businessmen), wireless sales companies (Marconi and AWA Ltd.), not to mention the declaration of World War I itself, all intervened to bring about change to the stultified regulatory environment then pertaining and to ensure the introduction of wireless technology in its multitude of iterations.

While also methodically tracing the manner in which wireless evolved in the colonial Pacific, specifically the BSIP, the thesis investigates and contextualises the philosophical and technical dimensions by which the authorities exploited the medium to control information flow, regulate commerce, express their own cultural dominance and suppress independence movements. Eventually, it took both the Second World War and a local rebellion against British authority to bring broadcasting into social prominence and to give a small radio voice, albeit moderated and controlled, to the indigenous Solomon Islands population.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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Publications during candidature

Chapters

Hadlow, M. (2014). No Propaganda Will Be Broadcast: The Rise and Demise of Australian Military Broadcasting. In S. Turnbull, B. Griffen-Foley & G. Goggin (Eds.), *Media International Australia* (150), 77-82. St. Lucia, Qld: SJC/University of Queensland.

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Chapter XI: the paragraphs relating solely to the establishment of the US Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) contain some of the research material and original wording submitted in my dissertation for MA (Mass Communications) at the University of Leicester, 2000/2003. Degree awarded July, 2003.

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‘The coral waxes, the palm grows, but man departs.’ (Tahitian proverb.)

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Abbreviations

AACS	Army Airways Communication System (USA)
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission (later Corporation)
ABC	American Broadcasting Company (USA)
AES	American Expeditionary Station (US military)
AFRS	Armed Forces Radio Service (US military)
AIF	Australian Imperial Force (Australian Army)
ANMEF	Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (Word War I)
APO	Army Post Office (designator for individual US bases/unit locations in WWII)
AWA Ltd.	Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd.
AWA 3B	AWA coastwatching radio set
AWA 3BZ	Upgraded model of the AWA coastwatching radio set
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BP	Burns, Philp (South Sea) Coy. Ltd.
BSI	British Solomon Islands
BSIP	British Solomon Islands Protectorate*
BSIPDF	British Solomon Islands Protectorate Defence Force
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System (USA)
CW	Continuous Wave
CWO	Chief Wireless Officer
DIES	Department of Information and Extension Services (TPNG)
EWC	East-West Center, University of Hawai'i
GEIC	Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony
GIS	Government Information Service
HC	High Commissioner
hp	horsepower
ICT	Information Communication Technologies (computers etc.)
kc/s	kilocycles
kHz	kilohertz (previously known as kilocycles)
kw	kilowatt
Lt.	Lieutenant
Lt.Col	Lieutenant-Colonel
MBS	Mutual Broadcasting System (USA)
MV	Motor vessel

NBC	National Broadcasting Commission (PNG)
NBC	National Broadcasting Company (USA)
USO	United Services Organizations (USA)
OWI	Office of War Information (USA)
Pfc	Private First Class (US Army rank)
PIM	Pacific Islands Monthly
PMG	Postmaster-General's Department, Australia
PRO	Public Relations Officer
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RANVR	Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve
RC	Resident Commissioner
RCA	Radio Corporation of America (USA)
RCAC	RCA Communications Inc. (Radio Corporation of America)
RMS	Royal Mail Ship
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
SIBS	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service
SIBC	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SINA	Solomon Islands National Archives
SIPA	Solomon Islands Planters' Association
SS	Steamship
SSEC	South Sea Evangelical Church
SWO	Senior Wireless Officer (BSIP)
T/5	Technician 5th Class (US Army rank equivalent to Corporal)
TPNG	Territory of Papua and New Guinea/Territory of Papua New Guinea
UK	United Kingdom
WPHC	Western Pacific High Commission
WRANS	Women's Royal Australian Navy Service

* The abbreviation BSI, without the P, was often adopted by officials, journalists etc. However, the full BSIP abbreviation is used throughout the thesis simply as a matter of linguistic consistency.

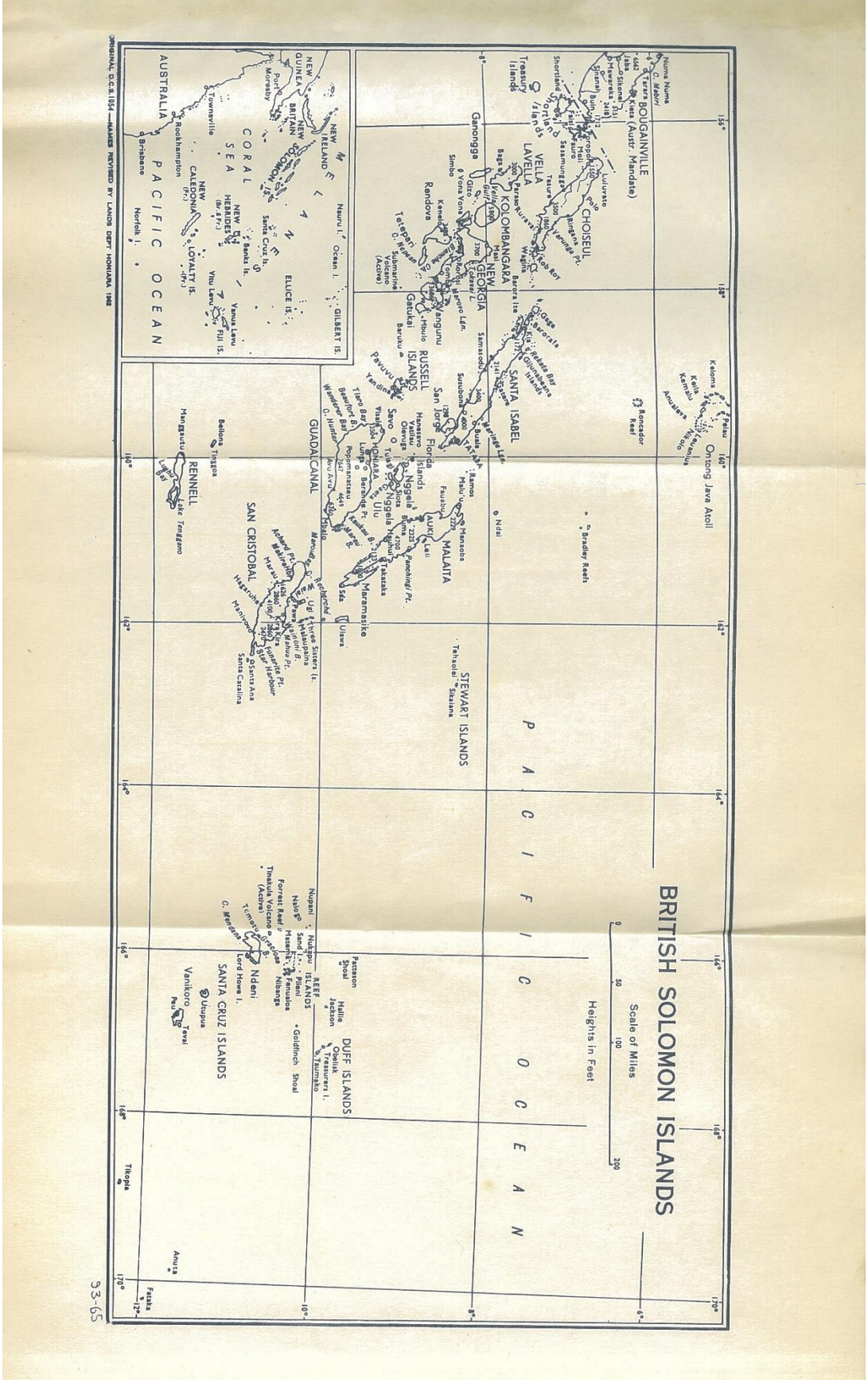

Figure 1: Map of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.

[Credit: Directorate of Colonial Surveys (DCS) and Lands Dept., 1962]

PREFACE:
PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

> Our national broadcaster is meant to be a source of enlightenment and national unity. Maintain this and our country will prosper and progress. (Hadlow, 1982, p. 1).
>
> Hon. Solomon S. Mamaloni
> Prime Minister of Solomon Islands[1]

An independent trajectory

On the 7th August, 1982, the development of public service radio broadcasting in Honiara, Solomon Islands,[2] took a significant step forward. It was on that day that a new studio and office complex, built with aid funding from the Australian Government, was opened in the Rove area of the national capital. To mark the occasion, the then Prime Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, expressed his hope that the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC), also known by its popular on-air title, *Radio Happy Isles*, would be a unifying factor in the country's future (Hadlow, 1982).

As a witness to the occasion in my role as the SIBC's News/Programme Trainer,[3] I knew of Mamaloni's interest in broadcasting and his difficulties with the SIBC's predecessor, the Government-controlled Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBS), which operated in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP) from 1952 to 1976. Mamaloni, who had been Chief Minister in the period leading up to self-government, was something of an erratic and 'difficult' political character whose maverick views had caused angst in the ranks of the colonial officials of Britain's Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) who were shepherding Solomon Islands to independent nationhood status.

---

[1] Solomon Suna'one Mamaloni (b.1943-d.2000) was the first Chief Minister of Solomon Islands and later served three times as Prime Minister (Moore, 2013).
[2] The country is known as Solomon Islands, not 'the Solomon Islands'.
[3] Martin Hadlow, News/Programme Trainer and, later, Head of Development and Training, SIBC, Honiara. 1980-84.

Mamaloni understood radio. He was an engaging person with a wry sense of humour and oratory skills of a high order, particularly in Pijin,[4] the country's *lingua franca*. He was also a creative man with an interest in drama and music, and had, in fact, acted in stage plays and had written poetry and other literature. One of his radio drama series, which was broadcast under the title *Aedo,*[5] ran on the SIBC in the mid-1970s and has been described by one critic as a "gem of all writing" (Goetzfridt, 1995, p. 61). *Aedo* was hugely popular and its plot "in Pidgin [sic] and with often Rabelaisian humour, charted the life and times of the eponymous Government factotum" (Rubin, et al., 1998, p. 413). The drama was very much improvised and it was "the explicitness of the realism and the raciness of the dialogue" (Rubin et al., 1998, p. 413) which seemingly led to the programme's cancellation. However, as, by then, Mamaloni was Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, there were claims that the demise of *Aedo* "was generally seen as politically motivated" (Rubin et. al., 1998, p. 413). One of the programme's producers, Ashley Wickham,[6] recalled that *Aedo* "was hilariously funny and carried serious information. Feedback was mainly from teachers" (A. Wickham, personal communication, 1984-2016). He admitted that "we overdid things when there was a bedroom scene" (A. Wickham, personal communication, 1984-2016) and this had upset missionaries and the 'elite', who called for the programme to be banned. The then Minister for Law and Information implemented the ban, a restriction which is still in place.

Corporate identity established

Of all the senior politicians in the country's self-governing days, Solomon Mamaloni was probably the most proficient in understanding the power of the media and the strength of the spoken word. In an island nation where literacy rates were poor and English was not universally spoken, both his command of colloquial Pijin and his recognition of the reach of radio broadcasting into isolated villages stood him in good political stead. In one of his first decisions as Chief Minister in 1975 (a year before full self-government and three years prior to the nation's independence) he set out "to lay the groundwork for the Broadcasting

[4] Pijin (variants are Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea and Bislama in Vanuatu) is the *lingua franca* of Solomon Islands. It has "a grammar of its own" and "a clear (...) linguistic structure" (Hall, 1955).
[5] *Aedo*, in a Malaita language, means the burnt remains of a cigarette (as in 'a fag-end').
[6] Ashley Wickham (b.1947-), from Munda, New Georgia, has an extensive background in journalism, radio broadcasting and media training. Currently General Manager of the SIBC. He also spent several years in senior Government service as a Permanent Secretary and as an elected MP, including a period as a Cabinet Minister (Personal communications, 1984-2016). See also Moore (2013).

Service to become a statutory body" (Hadlow, 1982, p. 1). As he took on the task of developing a 'public sphere' to promote a national conversation, his way was barred by colonial bureaucrats of the day who were, in his words, "hardly progressive" (Hadlow, 1982, p. 1) and he complained that "even my drafting instructions to the Legal Department were altered" (Hadlow, 1982, p. 1). Despite the set-backs, the legislation was passed in 1976, after Mamaloni had left office, and the SIBC officially came into being on the 1st January, 1977, in the era of the next Chief Minister, Peter Kenilorea.[7]

In the context of media control and ownership in the Pacific, the move to corporatize the Government radio broadcasting organization in Solomon Islands was almost unprecedented. Prior to independence, the neighbouring Australian-administered Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG) had a network of District-based radio stations of the Administration's Department of Information and Extension Services (DIES) operating alongside outlets of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). They merged to form the independent National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) on self-government day, 1st December, 1973 (Mackay, 1976).

However, despite this model, elsewhere in the region colonial influences continued to dominate the media scene. In the New Hebrides (later to become Vanuatu), the local broadcasting system simply moved from joint British and French Condominium administration to State ownership under the direct control of the incoming national government. A similar pattern ensued in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony (later to become Kiribati and Tuvalu respectively). In Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, radio was under the direction of either a statutory body (Tonga Broadcasting Commission, Fiji Broadcasting Commission) or the Government (Samoa Broadcasting Service).

Regional tensions

Prior to taking up my position with the SIBC in 1980, I had had several years of experience with public service broadcasting, governmental and commercial radio organizations in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the UK and the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. In 1973-74, after managing other DIES stations in the TPNG, such as Radio Kerema,

[7] Peter (later Sir Peter) Kenilorea (b.1943-d.2016). First Prime Minister (in 1978) of Solomon Islands. See Moore (2013).

Voice of the Seagull, Gulf District and Radio Morobe, *Maus blong Kundu,*[8] Morobe District, I was appointed Station Manager of Radio Bougainville, based in that District's administrative centre, Kieta. Radio Bougainville, known in Tok Pisin as *Maus blong Sankamap,*[9] broadcast on a shortwave frequency (3325 kHz) with a power of 10 kilowatts, giving it strong island-wide coverage and providing a signal which reached even to North America and beyond (see also Hadlow, 2002).

Bougainville was a relatively large island which, prior to World War I, had been under German colonial rule. After the war, it came within Australian auspices through a League of Nations mandate and, during World War II, was occupied by Japanese forces. Given its geographical location, both at the eastern extremities of the TPNG and at the northern reaches of the Solomon Islands chain, it saw itself as an 'outsider' in the TPNG context and more akin, ethnically and culturally, to its southern neighbour, the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP).

At the time of my tenure in Kieta, the whole of Bougainville was in a state of considerable political flux. One of the world's largest copper mines, controlled by Bougainville Copper Ltd.,[10] had been established on the island at Panguna (a site some 600 metres above sea level) and deep concerns about land tenure and environmental despoliation were already bringing about calls for secession from the national body-politic. As this was the period immediately prior to Papua New Guinea's (PNG) self-government and in light of the fact that the copper mine was to return royalties to the new PNG Government accounting for some 40% (or more) of the fledgling new nation's economy, the strategic value of Bougainville remaining a part of the nation was obvious.

Walking an important line of independently presenting the views of both the governmental authorities and the ordinary citizens in such a volatile climate was a challenge which had also been faced by my Radio Bougainville managerial predecessors. It is much to the credit of all the broadcasters at Radio Bougainville, most staff members having been drawn from the District itself, that, despite equally critical comment and antagonism from Government and pro-secessionist sectors alike, the station's credibility as an independent voice of diversity, inclusiveness and fairness broadly prevailed.

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[8] Literally 'Voice of the Kundu' (drum).
[9] 'Voice of the Sunrise'.
[10] A consortium dominated by the Rio Tinto Company and the PNG Government.

Sadly, in the 1980s, the political situation on Bougainville ran out of control and resulted in the closure of the mine, the destruction of its infrastructure and island-wide armed civil insurrection. Internecine warfare engulfed the island and, in the ensuing 10 years, some 60,000 casualties were reported.[11] During the conflict, a clandestine station, Radio Free Bougainville, was established by rebel forces with the aim of being "the primary link for secessionist-held areas of Bougainville with the outside world" (Cronau as cited in Robie, 1995, p. 167). From the Government side, media confusion reigned, with one author noting in 1994 that due to divergent views on the way the issues should be reported, "Papua New Guinea faced threats to two cornerstones of the Constitution- unity and press freedom" (Hiambohn, 1995, p. 191). Following a meeting of several provincial leaders to discuss secession, the Communications and Information Minister banned the National Broadcasting Commission from reporting the outcomes. Opposition Leader, Chris Haiveta, said the ban was "childish, unconstitutional and unprecedented" and he added "We cannot kill secession by banning any discussion on it" (Hiambohn, 1995, p. 193).

'Development communication' and radio

Despite the developing secessionist climate in the early 1970s, Radio Bougainville was phenomenally successful in reaching its primary audience. With a potential listenership of around 75,000 local residents, the station attracted some 30,000 letters a year requesting musical items or passing on news stories or village information, making comments on the current political situation and even seeking the station's help in intervening with local authorities on social or administrative issues in the main towns of Kieta and Arawa. Broadcasting in Tok Pisin, Radio Bougainville was, like its fellow Government-owned and operated DIES stations, one of the early proponents in the Pacific of what was then becoming known to the academic community as "development communication".[12]

Radio Bougainville's daily schedule (broadcasts were made only in the morning and evening when the hours of darkness favoured shortwave transmission propagation in the tropical frequency bands) heavily featured what would now be described as 'infotainment' development programming, such as sessions on agriculture, health, fisheries, trade, social

[11] Many books and articles are available on this period of Bougainville's history, such as Dorney (1998).
[12] A term said to have been coined by Dr. Nora Cruz-Quebral of the University of the Philippines-Los Banos in 1971.

welfare, women's interest and other specializations. The key aim was to ensure that such information was presented to villagers in an educational and informative manner, but with creativity and an element of panache, thus retaining the interests of the listener (Hadlow, 1974).

Not everyone was happy with the efforts of the DIES radio stations, prominent University of Papua New Guinea Research Professor in Anthropology, Dr. Edmund Carpenter, writing that "DIES is essentially a political instrument disguised as an educational & [sic] entertainment agency" (Carpenter, 1972, p. 184). In a book chapter headed "Why DIES has to be Dull", he contended that as the DIES radio stations were owned by the Government, they were symbols of power and, therefore, "Dullness is the ideal disguise. It makes power tolerable, even acceptable" (Carpenter, 1972, p. 184). In a back-handed compliment, he conceded that "DIES's amateurism arises not from any limitations of staff, but as an inevitable condition of its role as a political instrument" (Carpenter, 1972, p. 184).

Carpenter's views are, of course, his own. However, his thoughts on what constituted 'dullness' and 'amateurism' are debatable and result, perhaps, from the influence of his background in North America, where 'loud' commercial radio was the norm, rather than the measured public service broadcasting output more familiar to listeners in Commonwealth countries.

BSIP broadcasting perspectives

While the TPNG was undergoing a period of rapid social and political transformation leading up to Australia's deadline for independence for the new nation in 1975, in neighbouring BSIP a gentler pace of change was in progress. However, in the Western Solomons, geographically close to Bougainville, secessionist movements and political agitation during the time of self-government brought about a situation where there was action to establish either a 'breakaway' region from the BSIP, independent status for New Georgia, Choiseul, Vella Lavella and the Shortland Islands, or an accommodation with Bougainville in a separate country (Bennett, 1987).

Despite these moves and the less radical reform then occurring in its fellow-Melanesian nation, the BSIP was beginning to move inexorably from a "fragment of Empire" (Scarr, 1968) towards self-government in 1976 and full independence in 1978. Its national, State-operated broadcaster, the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBS), transmitted on

both mediumwave and shortwave frequencies and, while its programmes were heard widely within the country and across nearby borders, its news bulletins reflected official views as presented by the Government Information Service, rather than being editorially independent.

Although once having an extensive programming repertoire, including a well-organized schools' broadcasts schedule linked to the national education curriculum, the SIBS's programming had become increasingly moribund, its staff morale was low and its resources were stretched to the limit. At the same time, it was beginning to shed a proportion of its audience to alternative listening opportunities, thus many letters from radio listeners in the Protectorate went with a BSIP postage stamp to the letterbox of Radio Bougainville in Kieta in neighbouring TPNG, rather than to the SIBS in Honiara.

In 1977, responding to a request from the Solomon Islands self-governing authorities, principally the Chief Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, the Australian Government's aid arm, then known as the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB), committed extensive funding to assist with the conversion of the SIBS into the nation's first fully-fledged, independent public service broadcasting organization. The project, which commenced in earnest in 1978, was managed by Ove Arup and Partners, a major Australian architectural and civil engineering firm.

To help the SIBS transition from a Government entity to an independent public broadcaster, a new Board, led by its Chairman, long-time SIBS radio personality, William (Billy) Bennett, MBE, MM,[13] was constituted, a General Manager, Ashley Wickham, appointed and an Australian team comprising a project leader (John Hall), an adviser (Bart Kirby), two engineers (Graham Richardson and George Sulc), a financial/commercial manager (Barry Hayes) and a news/programme trainer (Martin Hadlow) was recruited to work with the local Solomon Islands staff to completely revamp the radio system and its daily output. A modern studio/office complex, new transmitters and a complete overhaul of the staffing table were also put in place, with the new broadcasting studio and office building being opened in 1982.

[13] William 'Billy' Bennett (b.1920-d.1988) from Kia, Isabel Island, was a decorated coastwatcher during World War II who later joined the SIBS in its infancy and went on to become the best-known on-air voice at the radio station. He received the Military Medal (MM) for his wartime work and the MBE for his broadcasting services. See also Moore (2013).

Research beginnings

In the lead-up to the opening ceremony, I was invited by the SIBC's General Manager, Ashley Wickham, to prepare a booklet on the origins of broadcasting in the country. The research led me to discussions with current and former SIBC staff, study at the Solomon Islands National Archives, and contacts with former broadcasters in the USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand and beyond.

The resulting publication (Hadlow, 1982) whetted my appetite to the potential for historical research into how wireless telegraphy and radio broadcasting began in the South-West Pacific, especially in the BSIP. More importantly, I was keen to not only ascertain how this electronic medium was originally used by the BSIP authorities, but also to understand their goals and objectives, and to appreciate the social impact wireless had on both expatriate and local populations.

Following my tenure with the SIBC, I departed the country in 1984 and continued my research interests in the subject. I undertook self-funded travel to the USA in 1990 and met (and tape-recorded oral histories with) almost all of the former US servicemen who had operated Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) military radio stations in the BSIP during World War II. These stations, known as *The Mosquito Network*, were the forerunners of the peace-time SIBS and provided news and entertainment for the huge wartime contingent of US military personnel then based on Guadalcanal, Russell Islands, New Georgia, Vella Lavella and elsewhere in the Protectorate. The AFRS media history project has already produced several publications (Hadlow, 2009; see also, for example, Hadlow, n.d.).

Colonial disruptions

On the islands of Guadalcanal and New Georgia in the BSIP in 1944, the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) of the US Army not only encouraged indigenous Solomon Islanders to broadcast local music (mainly hymns and popular songs) on their stations, but also instituted a regular news service in Pijin. The AFRS outlet at Munda (New Georgia) even transmitted programmes in the local language, Roviana (Hadlow, 2009). However, when the British colonial authorities resumed their administration of the BSIP at the end of the

war, the stations established by the American military closed, the transmitters and studio equipment being taken elsewhere.

The next time local broadcasts were heard was in 1947 when the BSIP Administration established a rudimentary broadcasting service, the development of which forms much of the key subject matter of this thesis. However, the authorities not only set out to use wireless as a propaganda tool against local rumblings of independence, they also did not allow, for several years, Pijin to be heard on the airwaves. This was despite the fact that the British colonial officers who were the pioneers of the introduction of wireless to the BSIP in 1947 pointed out to their superiors that "The idea of a pidgin [sic] news session for native listeners (...) was one of the aims of establishing a broadcasting station" (Broadcast session from VQO Honiara for Native Listeners, 1953-57, MSS & Archives 2003/1).

The strategy of a broadcasting organization not using the most commonly understood language in a country as its primary channel of communication to reach its listeners is a complete anathema to a professional media person. In neighbouring Bougainville, for example, it was simply accepted that, to reach its target audience, Radio Bougainville would transmit news and programmes in the local language understandable to the majority of the population. In the BSIP, the more accepted use of 'simple English', rather than Pijin, for broadcasting owed much to the view of the British authorities that a major world language would benefit the citizenry of the Protectorate more than a mastery of a dialect used only in Melanesia. It also reflected the colonial views of many that Pijin was very much a 'bastardized English' and unsuitable for use in any official form.

In an outpouring of emotion and frustration about the views of the senior WPHC hierarchy on the language issue, renowned linguist, Professor Robert A. Hall Jnr., lamented that "The official disapprobation of Pidgin is based essentially on the puristic assumption that it is an inferior brand of English, an 'ungrammatical corruption' and that it is therefore unsuited for use on any except the lowest, most informal, levels of communication" (Hall, 1955, p. 2). As late as 1953, the Honiara-based Western Pacific High Commissioner, Robert (later Sir Robert) Stanley,[14] was taken aback to hear some "Pidgin English" (Broadcast session from VQO Honiara for Native Listeners, 1953-57, MSS & Archives 2003/1) used in a broadcast by the newly constituted SIBS. "When and by whom was this

[14] Sir Robert Christopher Stafford Stanley (b.1899-d.1981). See also Moore (2013).

authorized?" (Broadcast session from VQO Honiara for Native Listeners, 1953-57, MSS & Archives 2003/1), he demanded in an official file Minute. "I do not wish any further broadcasts in Pidgin to take place without consultation with me" (Broadcast session from VQO Honiara for Native Listeners, 1953-57, MSS & Archives 2003/1).

Academic observations

Although I had not read Dr. Edmund Carpenter's book (O*h, What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*) during my time in the TPNG, I was already intrigued by the whole notion of media and culture in a scholarly sense, hopefully enabling me to broaden my understanding of the context and theoretical underpinnings of communication, rather than simply viewing the media through the prism of a professional broadcaster or community observer. In terms of cultural understanding, I could only ponder, for example, on a film night I once attended in 1972 when living in the isolated village of Kerema in the Gulf District of Papua. In this small place, located amid miles of river systems and swamps some 230 kilometres away from the capital Port Moresby, an indigenous film projectionist from my Department (DIES) set-up 16mm projection equipment along with a generator on the town's sports ground and proceeded to show films to an eager community audience of Papua New Guineans.

The content of the films, supplied by our Department's audio-visual library in Port Moresby, included Her Majesty the Queen on a horse 'Trooping the Colour' in London, highlights of the 1953 FA Cup Final from Wembley Stadium (featuring top player Stanley Matthews) and a staff training film from the USA explaining to female office secretaries how they could better serve their managers in answering telephones and taking notes. To this day, I remain bewildered by the meanings conveyed to the audience and how the information was understood and accepted by people who had probably neither seen a horse nor dense vehicle traffic in a major city, nor even a modern office or telephone switchboard. However, the resonance of the football images was clear and that segment of the session gained great audience approval. Perhaps the mere fact that films had been shown on the town sports field in Kerema was statement enough and gave some credence to McLuhan's oft-quoted dictum that "the medium is the message" (1964, p. 19). Together, as an audience, we felt 'modern' watching moving images in Kerema in a pre-television, pre-video, pre-Internet era.

A British Solomon Islands Protectorate colonial official (S. G. Knibbs, Commissioner of Lands) provides us with some additional valuable, non-scientific, cross-cultural communication observations from an earlier era, namely the 1920s, when he recounts an experience while showing some 'moving pictures' to indigenous people in Marovo Lagoon in the western part of the BSIP. Those in the audience who had already seen 'magic-lantern' slides were amazed by the technology and one "commenced to dance and wave his arms, repeatedly uttering the native expression of astonishment 'Koi!" Koi!'" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 271). A woman, who had never previously seen movies, started giggling to herself and "would clap her hand over her mouth and try to smother the laughter" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 271).

Knibbs found that the most popular film was a comedy in which an elephant (a species not present in the BSIP) pursued a group of uniformed police into an office. Sometime later, when Knibbs was accompanied by a Solomon Islander on a visit to Sydney in Australia, he took him to the zoo where the latter showed no interest in the elephants, "remarking in a blasé manner that he had seen them before in the pictures" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 272). Nor had he an interest in the lions and tigers saying "Him all the same pussy-cat!" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 272). His only concentration at the zoo was on the crocodiles, the one animal which was completely familiar to him, having seen many back in his home area. Perhaps Knibbs remained as bewildered in the 1920s by the Solomon Islander's adherence to familiarity as I was about the reaction to the content of the films my Department had shown in Kerema some 50 years later.

At the conclusion of my employment in Papua New Guinea, I undertook a self-funded Professional Development Associate programme at the East-West Center (EWC) at the University of Hawai'i in Honolulu. At the time, the EWC's Communication Institute (CI) was under the direction of the globally renowned communication scholar and author, Dr. Wilbur Schramm.[15] It was truly an honour to be able to participate in seminars under such eminent circumstances, to meet Dr. Schramm and to also be able to further my knowledge at the Department of Speech-Communication (under Dr. Richard L. Ryder) at the neighbouring University of Hawai'i-Manoa.

[15] Dr. Wilbur Schramm (b.1907-d.1987) often considered a founding father in the field of mass communication research.

The wealth of scholarly discourse available at the East-West Center, a unique resource base for studies into communication in the wider Pacific, shaped my thinking in many directions and provided opportunities to look in-depth at aspects of the interaction between communication, culture and society.

Conclusion

These then, are some of the research seeds that have grown through the years to culminate in the preparation of this thesis. The overall project is a fusion of theoretical and practical interests in the application of mass media in (so-called) developing countries, especially in the Pacific, as well as a chronological study into the development of wireless telegraphy/telephony and radio broadcasting in the BSIP, one of the more remote colonial possessions of the former British Empire.

The thesis research question does not seek to denigrate the role or efforts of the colonial authorities in their management of an under-resourced and isolated chain of islands far from the 'mother country'. To the contrary, many British officers assigned to service in the Western Pacific were of an empathetic nature vis-à-vis the colonised population and, working within the confines of the existing administrative structure and system, sought to do good work. Likewise, missionaries operating in remote and often dangerous locations believed in their vocation in 'converting the heathen', just as many planters and traders saw their roles as being important in generating a small cash economy to enable the BSIP to function and to bring developmental benefits to local people.

The challenges in administering the BSIP were many, not the least being the fact that the Protectorate was expected to be self-financing and was required to raise its operational revenue locally. For this reason, the BSIP was always the 'poor cousin' in the Pacific and faced considerable difficulties in introducing any form of education, health or other amenities for the indigenous population. However, the unwritten social contract between a government and the governed, even in a colonial setting, must surely respect the need to provide facilities for those who have no voice within the governing structure. The thesis acknowledges the limited resources available to the BSIP authorities, but also seeks to ascertain how the available funds were expended and why development activities were slow to take hold in government thinking.

CHAPTER I:
THESIS FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

> Wireless telegraphy was designed by the Almighty to meet the needs of the British Empire. ("Wireless and the Empire," 1923, p. 13).
>
> 'A Wireless Expert'

Context and historiography

In the firmament that was the British Empire, the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP), a scattering of small islands spread across a vast ocean swathe of the South-West Pacific, was considered as being one of the most remote colonial staff postings in a region already located at the opposite end of the globe to the centre of Imperial power in London. The antipodean BSIP existed as a possession of the British Empire from its foundation as a Protectorate (1893), through to its independence as a newly constituted nation in 1978. From its inception, it was seen as a "fragment of Empire" (Scarr, 1968) at the very edges of contemporary exploratory understanding and existing geographical knowledge.

The islands of the chain, stretching from present-day Bougainville in Papua New Guinea to the shores of the northern islands of Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides), remained hidden from foreign eyes for countless generations, the richness of traditional tribal societies with their own cultures and languages being an anthropological jewel barely known to an outside world. Until the Spanish explorer, Alvaro de Mendaña, arrived by ship in the year 1568 to find what he considered to be the "Isles of Solomon" and the location of the gold of King Solomon,[16] the islands remained a place of mystery and imagination to the Western world (Hackney & Thomson, 1967).

The reputation of Solomon Islands as an abode of cannibals, not to mention one with a hostile tropical environment replete with disease and dangers, ensured that those who followed in the wake of Mendaña's ships were, initially, very few in number. The first contact between the indigenous peoples and foreigners had been "a fearful experience for both" (Bennett, 1987, p. 22) as the European visitors, their intentions unclear, were initially

[16] It is a contested assumption as to whether Mendaña made this claim.

seen as being of ghostly appearance and carrying weapons and tools completely unknown to the local community. Numerous murderous clashes resulted, with European guns up against indigenous arrows, spears and war clubs, the resulting deaths on both sides causing greater schisms between interlopers and dwellers. Later, as further opportunistic European adventurers, traders, planters and, inevitably, missionaries and colonial administrators, arrived in the islands, a greater degree of fraternization brought about more interpersonal contact, although the wariness remained and often gave cause to violence.

As the Solomon Islands were being moulded by London into a British possession, the world beyond the Pacific was still in the grip of the industrial revolution, embracing new ideas, technologies and an internationalism hitherto unknown. The telephone, once described as “Bell’s electrical toy” (Aronson, 1977, p. 15) was making huge strides since its invention in 1876, while other communication technologies, especially the undersea cables laid across the globe in the second half of the 19th century, were revolutionizing diplomacy, trade, commerce and global understanding. Cables were also reinforcing old values of Imperial grandeur and the perceived inherent right of European nations to project power beyond their shores to dominate, conquer and exploit new territories.

By the early 1900s, the new technology of wireless telegraphy had begun to sweep the world. The value of this trans-national, electronic communication tool in connecting the scattered possessions of the British Empire became rapidly apparent to many, especially commercial enterprises, missionaries at remote outposts, plantation owners and shipping companies. Given the nature of the geography of the British colonial Pacific with its huge ocean tracts, the adoption rate of wireless by the British administering authorities would presumably have been undertaken with rapidity, rather than the reality, which was reluctance. This may partly be ascribed to the fact that telegraphy brought with it almost instant communication with higher British colonial authorities (i.e. ‘Head Office’), thus, for the first time, the all-powerful ‘man on the spot’ in the most remote places on Earth became answerable to others. There was considerable resentment of the new technological tool, “The tyranny of the telegraph kept gubernatorial decision-making on a tighter rein” (Hyam, 1993, p. 312) being a common view of colonial administrators used to a free hand in making the rules and running their own bailiwick.

Views and values of empire

Racial stereotyping and derogatory views expressed towards alien cultures were commonly evidenced in the world of the early 1900s. Such attitudes are not, fortunately, appropriate in the 21st century. However, not to include in this thesis the original wording used by the governing authorities, colonial officials, planters, traders, missionaries and other expatriates living in the BSIP in that period, would not paint a true picture of the thinking and influences which coloured the decision-making of the time. In this respect, Heller (1982) in discussing the values in historiography, makes the point that historians should recognise that the past must be judged by the values pertaining at the time and that if modern thinking is applied, "we cannot help but violate truth and the norm of scientificity" (Heller, 1982, p. 93).

Thus, it is against this background that the author has quoted words and comments in this thesis which are totally unacceptable in any era. The thesis also outlines attitudes which are abhorrent to the author and, indeed, in any civilized society, but particularly the 21st century. However, the details are included in the thesis in their original form (often taken directly from Government files, reports or official letters) in the interests of historical authenticity and accuracy. The author wishes this disclaimer to be noted as many of the words used, and attitudes mentioned, in the thesis could be construed as insensitive, distressing and, in some cases, repugnant.

The research question

The historiographical narrative which this thesis seeks to interrogate and interpret encompasses the broad context of the social and political application of wireless telegraphy/telephony and radio broadcasting during one period (1914-1947) in the existence of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP). The failure of the British authorities in the WPHC to recognise and grasp the possibilities afforded by the new technologies of wireless telegraphy, telephony and broadcasting constitutes the core of this thesis.

Although the BSIP was a hugely isolated grouping of scattered islands serviced only by occasional shipping from Australia, original research for this thesis shows that experimental wireless transmissions, albeit reluctantly authorised by the British authorities in the Protectorate, began as early as 1914 and that voice and music broadcasts (i.e.

transmissions more akin to radio than mere telephony) are recorded as having occurred in 1923.

During World War II (1939-1945) wireless was of such critical importance in the major battles enveloping the BSIP (from 1942) that it is hard to believe that the initial Allied victories at Guadalcanal and on New Georgia could have been achieved without the intelligence conveyed through AWA *Teleradios* operated by brave coastwatchers and SI Scouts. The US Naval Commander in the region at the time, Admiral 'Bull' Halsey, famously made the (often incorrectly reported) comment "The coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the Pacific" (Horton, 1970, p. 247). This important aspect of the application of wireless for specific purposes during wartime in the BSIP is discussed at length in Chapter X.

While chronologically assessing the technical introduction of wireless technology in the Pacific, the thesis deepens and broadens knowledge of the topic by researching and questioning the manner in which wireless was used by the colonial authorities to impose Imperial governance, regulate information flow and impede grassroots movements of indigenous BSIP people in seeking emancipation and political independence.

Significance of study

The academic literature relating to the Pacific's anthropology, history, languages, culture/custom and society is a richly endowed field, as is evidenced by the availability to the researcher of a multitude of publications, including journals, books, articles and audio-visual material. Mead, Oliver, Fox, Scarr, Crocombe, Laracy, Hilliard, Keesing, Bennett, Alasia, Watson-Gegeo, White and Lindstrom, Dening, Kabutaulaka, Jourdan, Pollock, Douglas, Gegeo, Moore, Quanchi are just a few examples of scholarly authors who have added richly to the field.

Fictional works also feature widely in the Pacific space, the famous books of James Michener (*Tales of the South Pacific*, 1946) and Jack London (*Cruise of the Snark*, 1911) being probably the best known. Popular films, such as *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935, 1962), *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), *The Thin Red Line* (1964, 1998), *Hawaii* (1966), *Midway* (1976), television series like *Hawaii Five-0* (1968) and the performances of stage and screen stars, such as Dorothy Lamour, the 'sarong queen', all go towards creating a romanticized image of the Pacific in the minds of Westerners, a place of coconut palms,

sandy beaches, blue waters and hibiscus - a sort of “paradise with air-conditioning” (Bayly, 1997, p. 2).

However, while reportage on the Pacific of foreign imagination and Hollywood’s retelling of wartime adventures is widespread, scholarship solely highlighting the relevance of wireless technologies and radio broadcasting is a research path less travelled. This is particularly so in regard to the BSIP.

To date, authors have not chronicled the early days of wireless telegraphy in the Protectorate, relying, instead, on references in monographs or journal articles to ‘radio’ or ‘listening-in’ or in mentioning the sending of signals, telegrams or radiograms from the main BSIP wireless station, *Tulagi Radio*. Thus, while the purpose of the messages carried by the medium of wireless in the BSIP has often been described, the actual mechanics of the medium and the philosophical reasoning of the pioneers who brought wireless to the BSIP has remained a field under-investigated.

In the available literature of the British-controlled colonial Western Pacific, especially the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, very little is discussed about the impact of wireless telegraphy, telephony or radio broadcasting. Apart from some more recent written references to aspects of modern radio broadcasting, education, training, journalism and media management in the Pacific generally (Kent, 1973; Mackay, 1976; Wickham, 1981; Hadlow, 1982, 2009; Robie, 1995, 2004; Bolton, 1999; Molnar, 2001; Tedder, 2008; Seward, 2009; Moore, 2013; Austin, 2013 et al), little has been researched into the genesis of wireless in the colonial South-West Pacific, its use, management and control, not to mention the impact on the population of the content it conveyed in this relatively isolated island grouping at ‘the end of empire’.[17]

Thus, this thesis brings new historical knowledge to the subject and also provides media and communication insights which may well be of consideration by other authors and researchers in helping to provide an additional academic and scholarly dimension and perspective when framing the effects and socio-cultural impact of foreign communication technologies on indigenous societies in the Pacific.

[17] Apart from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, the BSIP was one of the smallest and most remote postings in the Pacific to which a colonial officer could be appointed.

Literature review and theoretical framework

When Wilbur Schramm and Dan Lerner asked, in 1967, such questions as “What is the relation of communication to change in society? What precisely can communication do to assist economic and social development? And what kinds of communication strategies are open to a developing country?” (Lerner & Schramm, 1967, p. 56) they set a new generation of students and scholars on a path of knowledge creation and towards a greater understanding of the complexity of communication processes and their relationship to the manner in which people correspond.

The ideas of the philosopher and cultural historian, Walter Ong, in dissecting the nature of oral communication itself also have special resonance in a mostly non-literate developing society, such as the BSIP in the colonial era. His claim that people with a background only in oral communication and traditions (such as indigenous Solomon Islanders of the time) differed remarkably from those who were literate (the colonial rulers), may well partly be at the root of some of the comprehensive misunderstandings and fraught relationships between the authorities and the governed in the Protectorate.

If, as he contends, oral communication brings about its own thought processes, the intellectual gulf between colonialists and the indigenous population might have been greater than even either side could ever have imagined (Ong, 1982). The question comes to mind as to whether an earlier introduction, say in the 1930s, of wireless broadcasting, being an aural medium of communication, might have enhanced understanding across the BSIP and could have been of benefit to both indigenous people and settlers alike. However, even the powerful British Empire was fearful of the mass media, “a Pandora’s box they [Governments] cannot control” (Pool, 1990, p. 171), and how it might handle any fall-out if wireless was let loose without restrictions.

It must be said that, in many fields, such as language and oral tradition, the hard-bitten social attitudes of planters and traders would also have made cross-cultural cordiality difficult. For example, there was often pleasure taken by some BSIP expatriates in highlighting the lack of understanding of English usage by illiterate labourers, those making the criticism often not appreciating the colourful, intelligent and inventive turns of phrase presented to them in Pijin. “Heard a new one the other day,” wrote a correspondent derogatively to *The Planters’ Gazette*. “A Malaita boy wanted an envelope and said ‘More

better you give me one fella *basket* belong letter'" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, May, p. 6). If Ong's theories had been enunciated in an earlier age, perhaps the letter writer would have appreciated the linguistic creativity of the Pijin example which he derided, rather than mocking the manner in which it was presented.[18]

In reality, the differences in cultural understanding probably went much deeper and even reached into the education sector where, perhaps, the lack of comprehension of cognitive processes vis-à-vis oral (student) and literate (teacher) held back the educational development of the local population. In 1929, in a statement to the BSIP Advisory Council, the Resident Commissioner, Francis Noel Ashley,[19] lamented that although some formal educational efforts had been undertaken (by the mission stations, not the Government itself) "the fact remains that there appear to be no natives after 33 years of British Protection who can fill adequately the second class official appointments in their own country" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5, p. 5).

Not only was Ashley criticising his own Administration, he was also getting his officials off an embarrassing hook and laying the blame squarely at the door of the religious institutions that had implemented education for Solomon Islanders which his own Government should have been providing. However, he was also unintentionally recognising the gulf which existed between the expatriates and the indigenous population in terms of the type of education being offered and the understanding by the recipients of the hybrid brand of formal British learning then in place. More significantly, Ashley was also making clear, in an official colonial document, that the BSIP was a country owned by others, not the British. It took almost another 50 years for the British Empire to release Solomon Islands from its clutches and actually enable the people to achieve the goal and gain their own independence.

Mass media in BSIP society

When the British authorities eventually introduced a broadcasting service in the BSIP, they took a top-down approach to the use of the medium, rather than a participatory and inclusive attitude. Those controlling broadcasting had in mind a strategy for programming

[18] In post-colonial Solomon Islands, Jourdan (1995) sees Pijin as a national unifying factor, a 'community of language'.
[19] F. N. Ashley (b.1884-d.1976) was Resident Commissioner from 1929 to 1939. See Moore (2013).

which would inject ideas perceived as positive and healthy to a compliant audience. At the time (late 1940s and early 1950s) it was a commonly held view that the audience was “a passive, relatively defenceless target which, if it could be hit by ideas from the mass media, could be knocked over” (Schramm, 1973, p. 126). This was the “bullet point” (Schramm, 1973, p. 126) theory by which it was believed that the sender of the message could simply fire a bullet into the mind of the receiver and the message would take hold.

In many ways, these attitudes were not surprising in the BSIP situation as all of the expatriate officers involved in establishing the broadcasting service were well-meaning amateurs and carrying out the job, along with their other Government roles, on a part-time basis. Their knowledge of complex communication theory was non-existent and they were subject to official administrative rules and regulations which restricted their creativity, while their masters in senior levels of Government kept them on a short leash and ensured that nothing was broadcast without their approval. The view that “Governments everywhere have an inherent bias in favour of controls, restrictions and provincialism” (Pool, 1990, p. 204) was as true in the Pacific as it was in Europe and North America.

The use of media and language as tools of communication in a cross-cultural environment are ones which have exercised the minds of academics and media professionals alike for years. Indeed, the challenge has spawned several academic disciplines, including ‘communication for social change’, a genre which reaches deeply into the reasoning behind the acceptance of messaging, while also advocating for participatory communication to reach desired goals. The Centre for Communication and Social Change (CfCSC) at the University of Queensland points out that “The underpinning philosophy of CSC is that communication is not simply about transferring information and sending messages, but rather about listening, responding to, and helping people give direction to their own change, and supporting enabling environments for this change to take place” (About Communication for Social Change, 2015, p. 5).

The impact of mass media on society was also an area of scholarly study which began to take root in my own consciousness during my years in the TPNG, especially given that the DIES radio stations which I managed broadcast the daily news in several oral, non-written languages. How were people living in remote villages to understand, for example, alien concepts of democracy and the Westminster style of Parliament (then being introduced to

the country) when their ‘Big Man’ system and hierarchical chiefly structures were, usually, top-down and dictatorial in nature?

Perhaps (ego permitting), I was one of those minor DIES officials whom Dr. Edmund Carpenter described in his book as “men who knew this land intimately & [sic] had observed, with wonder and insight, the effects of electronic media upon its people” (Carpenter, 1972, p. 191). In talking of those same officials, he further believed that “Their views were nowhere taken seriously, even by themselves. What was needed, I [Carpenter] was constantly told, was someone like me [Carpenter], with degrees, who knew how to conduct scientific research” (Carpenter, 1972, p. 191).

In terms of the BSIP, the geographical subject area of this thesis, the questions posed by academicians (Schramm, Lerner, Ong, Pool) have a strong resonance and this thesis provides tangible exemplars of practical applications which address the relevant topics. However, the thesis is more than a treatise on communication issues, rather it also includes an historical overview of the chronological development of wireless.

Contextual approach to Pacific research

In undertaking Pacific research there is also the vexed question, posed by some commentators (Crocombe, Munro), as to the appropriateness of foreigners writing about the history of the region. Should not Pacific people themselves frame their own narratives, thereby ensuring that the material is presented in an apposite socio-cultural context? Crocombe,[20] an outspoken advocate of Pacific studies, talked of “academic imperialism” (Association for Social Anthropology Newsletter, 1968) as, in the early days of research in the region, most academic conferences on Pacific matters were held in the USA, Australia, New Zealand or Europe, rather than in the small island nations. This was due not only to the exorbitant costs incurred in travelling by commercial aviation in the Pacific, but also to the sheer logistical difficulties of reaching many geographical locations in this expansive ocean.

But, given the abundance of scholarly literature produced by international academics, does the question as to “Who *Owns* Pacific History?” (Munro, 1994, p. 232) have legitimacy?

[20] Emeritus Professor Ron Crocombe (b.1929-d.2009), former Director of ANU’s New Guinea Research Unit and Head of the Pacific Studies Centre, University of the South Pacific.

Does being an ‘insider’ (i.e. indigenous Pacific Islander) provide more entitlement to write on the region’s history than an ‘outsider’? Munro talks of the “Insider/Outsider Dichotomy” (1994, p. 232), but questions whether it might be too simplistic to label researchers as being in one camp or the other.

Western anthropologists have been unkindly likened to a “colonising horde” (Munro, 1994, p. 233) and contests over research findings (such as the controversies regarding Margaret Mead in Samoa) have enlivened the debate. The author of this thesis declares long-term domicile in the greater Pacific region (if New Zealand and Australia are included in such a setting), extended periods of tenure in the TPNG and Solomon Islands and involvement in media and communication activities in the FSM, Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga and Hawaii. Despite these linkages, whether an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ remains a question to be pondered.

Methodologies

Comparative historical research and the evaluation of archival and first-person material comprises the bed-rock to ensuring an illumination of issues arising and in resolving the research question posed by the thesis. The narrative relies heavily on original ‘primary source’ material gathered by the author, much of it unique as most of the informants and respondents contacted over a period of many years have now passed away. Their letters, voices on audio-tape and photographs shared with the author bring a new dimension to the subject, one earlier unheard and not available in any other historical collection, library or catalogue.

A key resource has been the print, audio and visual material viewed and interrogated by the author in archives and libraries in five countries. Specific mention should be made of the Western Pacific Archives held by Special Collections at the Auckland University Library in New Zealand. This cornucopia of administrative records of the British Empire in the Pacific is a resource without peer. In conjunction with those official files, the author’s personal collection of letters and oral history material gathered from other primary sources has, as indicated, also been of critical importance in developing the discourse.

However, the historian is faced with concerns even when assessing what might appear, on the surface, to be honest and ‘true’ material. Letters and diaries are notoriously fickle and

often “display [the writer] as they wished to appear, rather than as they were” (Oman, 1939, p. 73). Not surprisingly, it is a human trait to ensure that history will look favourably on the writer, thus diary entries “which prove him to have been a poor prophet” (Oman, 1939, p. 73) are often edited out or otherwise discarded by the diarist.

Similarly, human memory itself is prone to either exaggeration, the production of false reconstructions of events past or, of course, simple forgetfulness. Collective memory, where several recollections of a similar subject or activity are compared, can bring to the fore shared experiences which coincide, but, even then, it can be difficult to discern the truth. The work of Halbwachs and Bloch (Confino, 2011) wisely leads us into paths of caution in the whole field of history and memory.

The magnificent resource of the Western Pacific Archives in New Zealand is testament to the bureaucratic ability of Britain’s administrators to ensure that filing systems were built to store almost every piece of paper or note which crossed the desks of colonial officials. Fortuitously, the British system of passing files from one decision-maker to the next, before receiving a final signature of approval, has enabled the researcher to read hand-written file notations, first copies of letters and then the final document itself. Thus, while the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) files are bureaucratic and ‘correct’ in nature, they occasionally reveal gems of information when a bureaucrat may have dropped their guard and had written words which might provide new and personal insights to an event or situation. However, generally speaking, the researcher approaches the WPHC files in the full knowledge that they are official documents and a version of history as seen by British colonial officials of the time, thus being less than objective in their content.

Oral history is a field especially fraught with difficulty for the historian. The author’s own work in recording informants, especially as a grantee of the Trustees of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra for the institution’s first oral history project (1979), provides evidence that human memory can often be faulty and that manipulation of recollections of past events is a common tactic of interviewees. When several testimonies from different informants on the same, or a similar, subject are gathered, it is often noticeable that, while there is a collective and accurate memory of major events, each individual will usually have one or two additional specific memories of personal activities which remain unknown or unrevealed to the others in the group. Thus, a corroboration of several oral history recordings can usually produce a defined position on a key issue. However, Douglas,

Roberts and Thompson (1988) caution that oral history is sometimes criticised “as a kind of one-source history” (p. 4) and they go as far as to say that some historians consider such limitations as making oral testimonies “not history at all” (p. 4).

In several instances, it has not been possible for the author to cross-reference the content of some of the material within oral histories gathered for this thesis. However, by careful and reasoned consideration, an understanding is usually reached as to its authenticity. Come what may, to hear ‘living history’ recounted from the mouth of a participant brings rewards of its own, the value of holding for posterity in the archives the actual voice of a ‘maker of history’ being vital for future generations. The language used, the grammatical structure and the voice inflections all bring additional insights for the astute researcher to analyse.

Problems in access

One of the major difficulties in completing this thesis has been the relative absence in libraries and archives of personal accounts of the period in question (1914-1947) from Solomon Islanders themselves. While indigenous peoples of Solomon Islands have, for generations, recorded their history in the form of oral traditions, music, dance and other cultural forms, it is only in relatively recent years that written portrayals of life-stories have appeared (Fifi’i 1989; Gina 2003; Kenilorea, 2008; Osifelo, 1985; Zoloveke, 1980).

As indigenous Solomon Islanders were not involved in senior levels of the BSIP Administration until the 1950s (the first ‘natives’ to be appointed to the BSIP Advisory Council being in 1951), the paucity of material in the WPHC files documenting the day-to-day lives of indigenous people is a stark reminder as to the controlling influences of the British colonial system.

In the countless hours in which the author has viewed original WPHC files, few, if any, Solomon Islander written letters or notes have been located. In the late 1930s and into the 1940s, young men from Solomon Islands began to be appointed as clerks, to take on roles as medical dressers and to be trained as wireless operators. While the British files name the people concerned and provide a bureaucratic view of their background, actual written materials from those mentioned remain elusive.

Another difficulty relates to archival material lost during World War II. In 1942, the Imperial forces of Japan occupied the BSIP and took over the administrative centre of Tulagi. During subsequent fighting, Tulagi was almost razed, all of the files and documents not previously lost (by accident or misadventure) being destroyed. Consequently, key British records of the BSIP not transferred pre-war to the WPHC headquarters in Fiji are now missing. Fortuitously, the nature of British colonial administration was such that copious copies of paperwork received and despatched by the WPHC in Suva were retained on file, thus assisting modern-day researchers to maintain a competent track of many issues of bureaucratic governance.

Document management and use

As mentioned earlier, this thesis documents a time in world history during which derogatory racial references were commonplace and demeaning attitudes towards indigenous people by colonial overseers were considered as quite 'normal'. The dominance of the white male in the administrative and governing structures of the colonial outposts of the British Empire was an accepted fact. A strict hierarchy existed in Government, with colonial officers slowly working their way up career ladders from one Imperial outpost to the next. At a senior level, Government officers held huge power and made policy for indigenous people in societies of which, with notable and occasional exceptions, they had no deep understanding, little cultural awareness and even limited local language skills.

British public school and university educational backgrounds, not to mention family connections, were usually vital in achieving high-level overseas postings within the colonial bureaucracy. Wives of colonial officers did not have active employment roles in Government, but carried out charitable and other social duties, or helped with voluntary tasks seen by society at the time as suiting females, like teaching, nursing or missionary work. The Corona Society, an organization for the wives of colonial officers, was a global network and continues, in a modified form, to this day.

Even within colonial communities themselves, such as at the BSIP headquarters, Tulagi, the structure of society was such that Government officials held the highest place in the pecking-order, while they ranked commercial business people, traders and others to be very much beneath them. Societal values dictated that to be invited, for example, by the

Resident Commissioner to a cocktail reception or dinner function, even in a small and remote village like Tulagi where social activities were extraordinarily limited, was a hard-won (and greatly valued) privilege. Indigenous people in the BSIP did not have a ranking in the social scale at all, except as servants, native police or manual labourers.

In the available literature outlining the names of Resident Commissioners and High Commissioners of the Western Pacific High Commission territories from the year 1877 onwards, not one woman is cited as ever having held a role in either of these categories. This was not, of course, an uncommon situation across the entire swathe of the world then under British domination. For example, in the BSIP, no indigenous people were included on the Advisory Council until 1951. Where 'white women' did hold positions in working roles in WPHC Government offices, they were usually employed as typists, secretaries, clerks or in other similar duties. (This was to vary during wartime when some women were involved in war-related duties, such as in the cases of BSIP coastwatchers Ruby Boye at Vanikoro and Merle Farland at Vella Lavella, both from non-governmental sectors.)

In the BSIP's early colonial period, indigenous people were referred to as 'natives' and a King's Regulation (No. 3 of 1907) was even promulgated "To define the meaning of the term 'native'" (British Solomon Islands, 1907). More commonly, indigenous males, of any age, were spoken of as 'boys' and treated as children, while white males were called 'master' and expected to be accorded high-status by indigenous people. The 'Kanaka' trade had seen indentured labour taken, either forcibly or voluntarily, from the BSIP to work the cane-fields of Queensland and elsewhere in a practice then commonly accepted by the authorities.

Probably the first professionally typeset 'local newspaper' distributed in the BSIP, *The Planters' Gazette* (1920), published by a group of planters in the western areas of the Protectorate, could write (in November, 1921) about the Chinese merchants and traders in the Protectorate in these terms: "Chows are still considered and consider themselves as equals of the whites" (*The Planters' Gazette,* 1921, November, p. 6). The same journal advised its readers that "if one sends a [native] boy for a certain article, and he brings back the direct opposite, do not tell him he is the dopey offspring of unmarried parents. Laugh at the delinquent" (*The Planters' Gazette,* 1921, November, p. 12). A senior man of the Methodist Church in the BSIP could write to the Administration in the capital, Tulagi, and claim, in a letter, that some Government officials considered indigenous people "bloody

niggers" (Wireless Students from the BSIP- Training of (1940-46). MSS & Archives 2003/1). The Administration itself, in verbatim Minutes of an Advisory Council, felt no compunction in printing the view of one official (on a technical matter discussed at the meeting) that "I have not yet met any native whom I consider would be intelligent enough to do adjustments or repair work" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5, p. 15).

As indicated previously, the author finds the values and views expressed by many writers (and some British colonial officials) of the time as being totally repugnant. However, the original words have been included in the thesis in the interests of historical accuracy and because they convey a sense of the thinking of the age.

Archives accessed

In the course of research for this thesis, libraries and archives in five countries have been personally visited, print and photograph collections accessed and material gathered. Additionally, countless other collections have been viewed through web-sites, with comprehensive follow-up by electronic mail to gain further information.

The institutions visited by the author are:

Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands National Archives, Honiara.
Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation audio/print collections, Honiara.

New Zealand

Western Pacific Archives, Special Collections, Auckland University, Auckland.
Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Auckland.
Alexander Turnbull Collections, New Zealand National Library, Wellington.
Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin.
Radio New Zealand Sound Archives, Christchurch.

United Kingdom

National Archives, Kew, London.

Marconi Archives, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.
Porthcurno Telegraph Museum, Porthcurno, Cornwall.
Orkney Wireless Museum, Kirkwall, Orkneys.
Imperial War Museum, London.

Australia

Special Collections, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PAMBU), Australian National University, Canberra.
Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
Queensland State Library, Brisbane.
Fryer Library and SS&H Library, The University of Queensland, St. Lucia.
Emeritus Professor Clive Moore, personal collection.

USA

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.
Library of Congress, Washington DC.
Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, Riverside, California.
Newseum, Washington DC.
Special Collections, University of Southern California (USC) Library, Los Angeles, California.
Library of American Broadcasting and Broadcast Pioneers Library, University of Maryland, MD.

Oral histories/personal recollections/photographs

For material relating to the period after 1940, the thesis relies considerably on original, first-hand accounts of both former BSIP Government officers and US military personnel who operated radio stations in Solomon Islands during World War II. Attribution for all material gathered and used in the thesis is included in the bibliography, or as footnotes.

Oral histories were gathered by the author in both Solomon Islands and during visits to the USA in the 1980s, while personal correspondence (by mail and audio-tape) was undertaken with several senior BSIP officials and indigenous Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBS) officers. Personal correspondence with former senior BSIP

officials (and/or their families) was conducted over a period of several years, the information gathered and original photographs or associated material received being invaluable.

At least twelve separate oral history recording assignments were carried out by the author in the USA, with several more in Solomon Islands. Additionally, further audiotapes were received (at the author's request) from informants in the USA, UK and Australia. Original photographs have been provided by several contributors from their personal collections and have also been gathered from sources such as the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PAMBU) at the Australian National University in Canberra.

The thesis provides the reader with thirteen chapters, based around specific time periods, as the wealth of historical material and illustrations gathered requires the subject matter to be explored in-depth to better ensure the accurate recounting and scholarly analysis of events.

Thesis structure

The preface to the thesis seeks to contextually place the research within the author's own experiences and observations of living and working in some of the more remote regions of the South-West Pacific. In the 1970s, both the TPNG and the BSIP were undergoing major change as they transformed from colonial entities to independent nations. The media, especially locally-based radio broadcasting, was active in both neighbouring entities. However, it was developing in quite different styles and marched to the beat of different drums.

In the TPNG, the governing power was Australia, boisterously and vigorously transferring authority as quickly as it was able. With little experience in divesting itself of colonial possessions, the Commonwealth of Australia simply established a date for TPNG's self-governance and activated sufficient political will to see the deadline met and the goal accomplished. In the BSIP, a more cautious approach by the authorities was in progress as the British called in all their colonial civil-service expertise (known colloquially as 'old Africa hands' or, even, 'the Africa corps') to shepherd the Protectorate to nationhood.

By way of explanation, the words 'wireless' and 'radio' used in the thesis are almost interchangeable. Perhaps any differences in the terminology are best explained in a 1922

journal article aimed at the 'listening-in' community which noted that "In the early days of communication by Hertzian waves, the outstanding novelty of the new system lay in the absence of connecting wires between the two communicating stations. Hence the word 'wireless' was coined" (Sea, Land and Air, 1922, p. 468). However, the author went on to point out that "As the art progressed, attention became focussed more on the extremely high frequencies of the alternating currents used, this being known as 'radio frequencies'" (Sea, Land and Air, 1922, p. 468). The article then concluded that "the new means of communication became known as 'radio telegraphy' or, abbreviated, as 'radio'" (Sea, Land and Air, 1922, p. 468).

Chapter I theoretically frames the thesis and the methodologies used, including discussions on archival research, along with an analysis of the gathering of oral history material and interventions, by correspondence, with original sources. It also outlines the key research question which is explored and identified in the thesis and, additionally, explains the overall significance of the study in adding to scholarship on communication activities in the Pacific region.

The thesis then seeks, in chapter II, to position the research into the existing Pacific colonial context of the time. With competing powers (Germany, France, Great Britain and the USA) being influential in the pre-World War I arenas of the South and South-West Pacific, and Japan and China contesting the northern regions, the Pacific was a 'lake' open to foreign conquest and domination. The declaration of World War I in 1914 brought about a complete re-alignment of colonial 'ownership', with Germany leaving the scene and Australia and New Zealand taking a more influential role (in the absence of Great Britain) in holding high the flag of empire.

As the main communication technology to be reviewed in this thesis is wireless (in its various forms, but, primarily, as wireless telegraphy/telephony and radio broadcasting), Chapter III (c. 1900-1910) of the thesis includes a comprehensive initial overview and outline as to the importance of this new medium in the latter years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. It then juxtaposes wireless with the Pacific itself, a region just awakening to the possibilities and potential of the technology.

Chapter IV (c. 1910-1913) develops the story in the BSIP from the time of a major conference on Pacific wireless telegraphy held in Australia, through to technical

experimentation with the medium undertaken by the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) in Fiji and elsewhere within the colonial realm.

The first experiment with wireless in the BSIP is revealed in chapter V (c. 1913-1921). This historic occasion opened the door for future development of wireless although, unfortunately, the inaugural experiment coincided with the declaration of World War I and resulted, for security reasons, in a rapid curtailment of the wireless licence. However, the outbreak of war also saw movement from the British authorities in quickly establishing a major wireless telegraphy station in the BSIP. *Tulagi Radio* equipment was constructed in the Marconi workshops in England, shipped to the Protectorate and installed by late 1915. In the post-war years, heavy pressure was mounted on the British Administration by the BSIP's private sector, especially planters and traders, to allow for the introduction of privately owned wireless stations.

In chapter VI (c.1921-1924), the value-add of wireless telegraphy/telephony to commercial businesses and religious missions in remote locations is outlined. Despite the requests of the non-governmental sector for the Administration to go further and introduce full-scale broadcasting of official news and information, the authorities did not accede to such a proposal for more than another decade. In 1923, the first BSIP private telephony licence was granted to the Methodist Mission at Roviana (in the western part of the BSIP), with inaugural (non-official) voice and music broadcasts being made in August of that year. Especially noteworthy was that indigenous Solomon Islanders at the Mission had become experts in using Morse code and not only operated the station's equipment but, later, managed the entire enterprise.

Chapter VII (c. 1924-1930) sees a period of consolidation with a new trend, 'listening-in', becoming popular and breaking the isolation of expatriates living in remote areas of the BSIP. However, with changing technologies, the latter part of the 1920s also brought the realization that equipment installed at the Government station at Tulagi was obsolete and that a new station was needed. With the Australian firm AWA Ltd. taking an aggressive business stance in the Pacific, it began to dominate the radio scene, both in shipping and shore-based operations.

The drum-beats of war were beginning to be heard in the 1930s and chapter VIII (c.1930-1938) provides an overview of the prescient voices calling for preparations to be made in

the BSIP to counter, or mitigate, any foreign intervention. After years of denial about the necessity of a broadcasting service, it was also time for the Administration to start sharing information and news with its citizenry. It did so through a weekly service, the first news broadcast being presented in March, 1938. Across the remote BSIP, new radio sets were being installed, the transmitter/receiver of choice being the Australian-made AWA 3A and 3B, later to become the AWA 3BZ, the backbone of the wartime coastwatching network.

Chapter IX (c.1938-1941) sets the scene during the period of calm before the storm. With war declared in Europe in 1939, the BSIP, although at the opposite end of the world, was affected by the strain on the 'mother country', the potential for war spreading to the Pacific being apparent to the WPHC authorities. Wireless activities were reinforced and a covert coastwatching chain of volunteers was put in place using the latest available two-way radio sets (AWA *Teleradios*). Within seven months of Japan's military attack on Pearl Harbour, the first Japanese soldiers had already advanced into the South-West Pacific, over-run the BSIP and occupied Tulagi. The radio reports of the coastwatchers were then increasingly vital in the intelligence battle as Allied forces fought to regain lost territory.

The years 1942-44 saw massive battles in the BSIP, with a huge influx of Allied service personnel, especially from the USA. Chapter X (c. 1941-1943) describes radio during the coastwatching years, the importance of wireless in winning the war and also the value of radio to both Japanese and American military forces then locked in combat in the Protectorate.

As the bitter fighting moved northwards through the islands on the 'Road to Tokyo', Guadalcanal became a major Allied logistical base. Chapter XI (c.1943-1945) introduces the US Armed Forces Radio Service (*The Mosquito Network*) which established broadcasting stations for troops on both Guadalcanal and New Georgia. These stations also provided an outlet of music and news for indigenous Solomon Islanders, the first serious attempts at providing some form of broadcast service for local people in their own languages.

Peace came to the BSIP in 1945 and, with it, indigenous pro-independence elements began to stir. Maasina Rule, also known as Marching Rule, developed as an emancipation movement and a counter to the return of the British Empire's rulers at war's end. Chapter XII (c. 1945-1947) recounts how the British commenced post-war radio broadcasts in the

BSIP, specifically in an attempt to stifle the swelling rebellion. The small broadcasting operation, which opened in 1947, was named by the wireless Officer-in-Charge as *The Shoestring Network*.

The thesis concludes (Chapter XIII) with a summary of lessons learned and new knowledge gained. It outlines the next steps, namely the journey onwards as the formal structure of national broadcasting developed and Solomon Islanders became more involved in its operations. However, the road ahead was not an easy one, with major arguments ensuing as to issues such as language use on the radio station, programming and the content of news bulletins. Eventually, an independent Solomon Islands nation was able to walk its own broadcasting path.

CHAPTER II:
THE IMPERIAL PACIFIC

> With, I honestly believe, as little cruelty as possible and with a minimum of needless interference, but quite resolutely, the British race went on its way, tidying up shabby corners of the universe and putting order and progress where there had been anarchy and stagnation (Fox[21], 1928, p. xiv).

Popular culture and distant corner of Empire

In one lifetime, a cultural artefact from Solomon Islands has eclipsed anything either Sir Frank Fox or the colonial administrators of the Western Pacific High Commission could ever have imagined possible as they went about ensuring that the "shabby corners" (Fox, 1928, xiv) of the world were absorbed into the British Empire and made prosperous and in alignment with the planet as seen from London.

On the 20th August, 1977, just one year before Solomon Islands gained independence from Britain, the Voyager 1 spacecraft lifted off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, USA on a Titan-Centaur rocket. Now, after 39 years of travel through the cosmos, Voyager 1 is in inter-stellar space beyond our solar system and has travelled further than any other object from planet Earth. On board is a 'golden record', imprinted with 115 of the most significant human socio-cultural items known on our planet, comprising images, music, languages, voices and sounds (The Golden Record, 2016). One of the precious selections on the 'golden record' and now in the divide between our dimension and the gravity-pull of the next star capture, is a one-minute-and-twelve-seconds recording of Solomon Islands panpipes, produced by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBS).[22]

Solomon Islands music has continued to prove popular. In 1986 a tune, sung by Afunakwa of Baegu, Malaita, was 'sampled' (with no attribution) by French composers and re-named

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[21] Sir Frank Fox was an Australian-born author, soldier and Imperialist. See Rutledge (1981).

[22] In 1982, the author had the honour of recording (for the SIBC) its first commercially saleable audio cassette (titled "Solomon Bamboo") of another musical form, the bamboo band, recorded at Ughele on Rendova.

Sweet Lullaby for the award-winning disc, *Deep Forest*. The CD made millions of dollars for the record company, but nothing for the traditional artists in Solomon Islands (Zemp, 1996).

In 1928, when Sir Frank Fox was imagining that the British Empire would last forever, and that “shabby corners” (Fox, 1928, p. xiv), such as its Pacific possessions, could be kept in their place, the BSIP was still being described in newspapers, journals and books as a land of cannibals and head-hunters. Indeed, the Protectorate was one of the more remote parts of the globe and deserved much of its reputation. Raids by tribes on one another were commonplace and proved an endless difficulty for not only the Government, but also for expatriate planters, traders and the missionary out-stations.

Authors of the colonial era fed rapaciously on tales of ‘derring-do’, one fictional book for boys, *Sea Scout and Savage: Adventures among the Cannibals of the Solomon Islands* (Leighton, 1923), showing the drawn image of a young white Sea Scout, stick of dynamite in hand, standing in a canoe being paddled by a Solomon Islander. He was hurling explosives at other canoes chasing him, the noble young Englishman of popular Imperial literature again seeing off primitive souls whose only desire was to rampage and kill. The coded message was clear- young British boy against adult South Sea islanders in a colonial setting meant the latter stood no chance.

The international media of the time also had a single-minded view of the region, again framing their perspective from the idea of cannibalism, which provided much content for their graphic reportage. Newspapers in Australia and New Zealand bombarded readers with adventurous tales under such headlines as “Among Head Hunters. Life in the Solomons establishing a Mission. Women’s Grim experiences” (“Among Head Hunters”, 1922, p. 3). In 1893, the year the islands came under British rule, Solomon Islanders were seen by a British author as “amongst the most notorious cannibals of the Pacific” (Hogan, 1893, p. 595) and warlike enough to attack foreigners with “a shower of spears and arrows” (Hogan, 1893, p. 595). Fifty years later (in 1942), the foreign press was still promoting the view about Solomon Islanders that “their weakness is anthropophagy” (Time, 1942, p. 21) and that they had “an incurable habit of roasting and eating white visitors” (Time, 1942, p. 21).

In the field of popular culture, Melanesia (encompassing Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, New Caledonia, New Guinea and Fiji) continued to be displayed to the world as a place of warriors, backwardness, heathen societies and personal danger well into the mid-20th century. Film-makers Martin and Ona Johnson shot footage in 1912 on an island near Malekula in the New Hebrides, a documentary being released publicly in 1918 as *Cannibals of the South Sea Islands*. Also in 1912, Douglas Rannie, the Government agent for Queensland, published *My Adventures Among South Sea Cannibals: An account of the experiences and adventures of a Government official among the natives of Oceania*, further reinforcing the misguided and incorrect view that the Melanesian region was culturally and socially homogenous and that all the citizens sought human flesh ('long pig') as a food source.

For anyone to imagine that a cultural product of Solomon Islanders would, less than one hundred years later, be propelled through the infinite cosmos of outer space aboard a vehicle from Earth, would have seemed an impossible likelihood, beyond even the realms of science fiction. However, reaching for the stars was not beyond the ambition of other colonialists, with the African adventurer and business mogul, Cecil Rhodes, once rhetorically proclaiming his enthusiasm for more Imperial acquisitions, his peers saying that "he would like to annex the planets, if that were possible" (Hyam, 1993, p. 204).

Empire-building

The economic self-interest of the British Empire, along with a belief in its own infallibility, moral righteousness, political superiority and 'right to rule', enabled it to control large swathes of global geography from its central core in London. As a ruler, it was pragmatic in its judgements and statecraft, with commerce, rather than simply being an after-thought of Empire, actually playing a leading role. The British East India Company, the hongs[23] of Hong Kong and the planters and traders of the Straits Settlements[24] were all vital participants in Britain's domination of the geographical and economic landscape and agenda. As the British Statesman, Viscount Palmerston, is reputed to have said, describing Britain, its colonial thinking and the essence of its Empire, "We have no permanent friends or permanent enemies, only permanent interests" (Holsti, 2004, p. 4).

[23] Major trading houses, such as Jardines, Swire etc.
[24] Singapore and (the then) Malaya.

In an era in which Empires were being built by many European nations from the wholesale carving-up, without consultation, of large areas of the globe, Britain, using economic power, military muscle, international treaties (usually arranged in collaboration with other like-minded colonial powers), diplomacy of an order often akin to skulduggery, 'divide and rule' tactics, deal-making, exploration, the deliberate stirring of inter-tribal dissent and religious/social disharmony, propaganda, massacres of dissidents, oppression, suppression and the exploitation of people and resources, was able to rule more parts of the world than any other since the days of the Roman Empire.

It goes without saying that positive British colonial efforts in developing infrastructure, systems of government and improving social conditions were also accompanied by an equal number, or more, of poorly judged adventures (exemplified by 'blackbirding', the virtual slave-trading of Solomon Islanders for labour in the cane fields of Australia and Fiji) and misdeeds (like the punitive shelling of Malaita villages by HMS *Royalist* on 1st/2nd August, 1891) ("Cruise of H.M.S Royalist", 1891, p. 4). Technology was a key issue in British colonial ambition, one Governor-General of India even singling out, in 1848, what he saw as the "three great engines of social improvement- railways, uniform postage and electric telegraphs" (Hyam, 1993, p. 112). The BSIP achieved two out of the three, no national railway system ever being constructed in the islands.

The Government bureaucracies of many countries, infrastructural development of roads, schools, hospitals and telecommunications, the introduction of farms and wide-scale cropping, establishment of Parliaments and democratic traditions, not to mention the implementation of British law and the use of the English language, were all components of a civil society with impacts which are still felt in many countries, including present-day Solomon Islands. However, while the Imperial power took pride in the editorial independence of its British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), it never allowed any of its colonial possessions (outside the 'white Dominions') an uncontrolled and uncensored radio broadcasting voice.

In many jurisdictions across the globe, the fundamental elements of much of the legislation brought about under UK colonial rule have been maintained, while adaptations of introduced norms have also been evidenced over the years as countries across the British Empire gained their independence. Despite their colonial experience, many newly independent nations freely became members (albeit with the economic and political

encouragement of Great Britain) of a new global entity established by the former colonial power, namely the Commonwealth of Nations. Shrugging off the yoke of British colonial rule was usually the joining fee.

Partition of the world

Britain came to Solomon Islands more by chance and circumstance, than design. Towards the end of the 19th century, politicians in Europe felt themselves to be living in a time which was described by one British Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, as an era of "a partition of the world" (Hyam, 1993, p. 204). A leading UK newspaper had, in January 1885, even diagnosed a "scramble for Africa and Oceania" (Hyam, 1993, p. 204) as nations rushed to annex territory in keeping with their colonial ambitions.

In the Pacific, sailors, explorers and traders had, of course, been actively traversing the region for years. Magellan (Portugal), Mendaña (Spain), Cook (England), La Perouse (France), Tasman (Holland) had all entered a space which had been populated for countless generations by indigenous peoples, but which now faced what an author has described as "The European Trespass" (Fisher, 2013). Bringing bounty in the form of new foods, alcohol, tobacco, tools and weapons, but also diseases which had catastrophic consequences for local populations, the isolated islands of Oceania were soon the playthings of foreign powers seeking economic riches and geographical conquest.

Missionaries arrived with a new religion completely alien to the social mores then existing. In 1845, six Catholic Fathers and five lay Brothers from the French Mission Society of Mary landed on San Cristobal in Solomon Islands, their leader, Bishop Jean-Baptiste Epalle,[25] being murdered on the island of Ysabel in December of that year ("The British Solomon Islands Protectorate Report 1911", 1912, p. 14). In the 1850s, Anglican Solomon Islander proselytes of New Zealand's Melanesian Mission (now the Church of Melanesia) reached Solomon Islands and began their work (Fisher, 2013). By and large, missionaries were independent of British Government support, quite often becoming critics of the colonial administration while, "in its turn [Government] was not infrequently profoundly disapproving of what missionaries were doing" (Hyam, 1993, p. 96). This latter situation was especially so in the BSIP.

[25] Jean-Baptise Epalle (b.1808-d.1845). Vicar Apostolic of Melanesia and Micronesia. Murdered on Ysabel December 19, 1845. See also Moore (2013).

Traders, planters and adventurers followed the missionaries, not all having good intentions. In the period from about 1870 to 1910, the labour trade practice of 'black-birding' was carried out, the black-birders being described by one prominent Solomon Islander academic and diplomat as "European thieves of human bodies and souls" (Bugotu, 1968, p. 69). Around 30,000 Solomon Islanders were recruited, sometimes violently or through subterfuge, for work in the sugar-cane plantations of Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia (Bennett, 1987). Whether for reasons of illness, death, virtual enslavement, or a desire to continue in the cash economy abroad, 10,000 never came back (Fisher, 2013).

And yet, for all their efforts, the role of the indigenous population was hardly recognised, the authorities not even knowing how many lived in the BSIP. "The natives of the Protectorate are believed to amount in number to 150,000, but the estimate is only a tentative one" (Allen, 1919, p. 252) reported a 1919 guidebook to the BSIP. In a British colonial possession where a racial gulf between the 'natives' and the expatriate population was commonly accepted in such times, the 1919 figures also included an entry for the "white population" (estimated at 600) and, as an after-thought, "there are, in addition, some 50 Chinese" (Allen, 1919, p. 252). Until 1951, when four local people were nominated to the Advisory Council, "no Solomon Islander had any say in the central administration of the Protectorate" (Moore, 2010, p. 6).

A Protectorate is established

While commercial and religious entities entered the region, major powers, primarily Britain, Germany and France, also began to take stock of any Pacific territory they could occupy. The Gilbert Islands were taken under British rule, as were the non-German annexed parts of New Guinea. With France seeking to branch northwards from the New Hebrides and with Germany looking to move south from Buka and Bougainville, considerable alarm was expressed in Australia about the fate of the Solomons, resulting in Britain declaring a Protectorate over all the islands south of Ysabel in June, 1893 (Scarr, 1968; Bennett, 1987; Hyam, 1993; Munro & Firth, 2003; Fisher, 2013).

For Britain, there was little economic advantage in establishing the Protectorate, given that few British settlers lived there[26] and little agricultural activity was currently underway. Indeed, without the concern expressed by Australia, not to mention an attempted land-grab by Sir William MacGregor (Governor of British New Guinea) who sought both the New Hebrides and the non-German parts of Solomon Islands for his own turf, Britain may well have not proceeded with annexation. It was all very "half-hearted" (Scarr, 1968, p. 295) and "a reluctant Britain was forced once again to take up her territorial options" (Munro & Firth, 2003, p. 236). Perhaps 'reluctance' may seem a little disingenuous, given Britain's track record in global domination.

The Protectorate was ruled from the Western Pacific High Commission, a body which had been established in 1877 with its base in Fiji, but which was considered as "a rather weak experiment in providing order and jurisdiction without assuming sovereignty" (Hyam, 1993, 209). Charles Woodford,[27] a naturalist supplying the British Museum with specimens from the islands, was offered the role of Resident Commissioner of the BSIP and took up the post in 1896, establishing Tulagi in the Florida Islands group as his headquarters (Fisher, 2013).

Woodford was a man ideally suited to the task. He had great affection for the islands and truly believed that they would thrive under British rule. "Here was an object worthy of the devotion of one's life" (Scarr, 1968, p. 262), he proclaimed. With a £600 grant-in-aid to establish a local government in the BSIP, he set himself to the challenge. He purchased the island of Tulagi for £42 (Moore, 2013) and then received a further £1200 from a sympathetic High Commissioner, Sir John B. Thurston,[28] to construct a residency and establish the nucleus of an administration. The rest of the funding had to come from commercial taxation and other sources (Scarr, 1968).

[26] The resident white population (all males) was 50 in 1896. (The British Solomon Islands Protectorate Report 1911, 1912, p. 21).
[27] Charles Morris Woodford (b.1852-d.1927), naturalist, Resident Commissioner, BSIP (1896-1915). See Moore (2013).
[28] Sir John Bates Thurston (b.1836-d.1897), Western Pacific High Commissioner 1885-1887. See Moore (2013).

He was joined by a Deputy, Arthur Mahaffy,[29] who, with a £2500 grant ("The British Solomon Islands Protectorate Report 1911", 1912, p. 37), was assigned by Woodford in 1899 to set-up a new post at Gizo in the western region of the BSIP. There, with a contingent of local policemen, he sought to maintain order, especially amongst the warring clans of the various islands (Moore, 2013; Scarr, 1968). The establishment of other Government Stations followed at the Shortland Islands (1906), Auki (1909), Marovo Lagoon (1910), Aola (1914) and both Kira Kira (San Cristoval) and Tunnibuli (Ysabel) in 1918 ("The British Solomon Islands Protectorate Report 1911", 1912, p. 21).

Levers Plantations Ltd. arrived in 1905 and, at Woodford's urgings, both leased and purchased large areas of land in the BSIP for copra production. They also bought the island of Gavutu, close to Tulagi, as their main wharf and commercial headquarters (Scarr, 1968). Burns Philp & Co. was also present at nearby Makambo Island. With such major firms now based in the Protectorate, transport and shipping became more regular, the expatriate population increased[30] and taxation inflows[31] to the BSIP Treasury began to grow.

It was on the visiting cargo ships[32] that Woodford saw for himself the new invention of Marconi's wireless telegraphy being used for long-distance communication and this was, without doubt, not only a factor in his later enthusiasm for the medium, but also the reasoning behind his decision to issue the first private wireless licence in the BSIP (in 1914) and to hasten the establishment of *Tulagi Radio*, the BSIP's main Government wireless station. (See Chapter V.)

'The Islands Lost in Time'[33]

Solomon Islands has favourably embraced its reputation as a mysterious place, remote, 'off the beaten track' and relatively unknown to the outside world. While, for the indigenous

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[29] Arthur Mahaffy (b.1869-d.1919), Deputy Resident Commissioner, BSIP 1896-1904. See Moore (2013).
[30] By 1929, there were 493 European residents in the BSIP. (The British Solomon Islands Protectorate Report 1929, 1930, p. 11).
[31] For example, fuel and alcohol excise, customs duties and an annual 'capitation tax' of £5 per person which was imposed on all "white male residents, other than missionaries". ("The British Solomon Islands Protectorate Report 1911", 1912, p. 38).
[32] Levers Ltd. steamer, 'Kulambangra' visited the BSIP every 11 weeks and the Burns Philp ship every 6 weeks. Thus shipping from Sydney (via Brisbane) was about 15 times a year.
[33] Slogan of the Solomon Islands Tourist Authority, 1993.

population, its status as an isolated island chain, governed by Britain, was a fact of life over which they had no control, for the expatriates who arrived as businessmen, missionaries or bureaucrats, the ambience of being in a land faraway from Western lifestyles was both compelling and intoxicating.

"So you've come to the Sorrowful Islands" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 24), was the welcome one senior official[34] received when he arrived in Tulagi to start his assignment. Another expatriate told him "Alas, poor brother, you have my sympathy" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 24). However, as Knibbs discovered and reported in his memoirs, "The South Sea Islands possess an attraction which defies explanation" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 24). He told how expatriates continually complained about their conditions but, should they depart for any length of time, usually sought to return to the islands, such was the allure of the environment and lifestyle.

For missionaries, who devoured the chance to reside and preach in an environment previously untouched by foreign religious ideals, success in living in loneliness in these remote islands was measured in terms of subjugating the 'lower races' and injecting a belief in a Christian God into their lives. "Savages have literally become saints, head-hunters have become preachers of the gospel, cannibals have become Christian gentlemen" (Methodist Mission of New Zealand, 1921, p. 108), trumpeted the Methodist Mission at Roviana. "A dirty, ignorant, selfish, lazy people have become sincere Christians, in whom is seen the beauty of holiness" (Methodist Mission of New Zealand, 1921, p. 108).

In deference to the reputation of the mission stations (Melanesian Church, SSEC, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist etc.) in the BSIP, it must be noted that responsibility for developing formal education and much of the Protectorate's primary health care fell to them, in lieu of the British Administration's lack of efforts. In 1929, the local government even provided a £150 technical grant to three missions (SSEC, Methodist and Seventh Day Adventist), being £50 each, and noted, without embarrassment for its own failings, that "Education is entirely in the hands of the various mission bodies" ("BSIP Report for 1929", 1930, p. 11). District Officer, D.C. (Dick) Horton, blamed the situation on the fact that the Protectorate had to pay its own way with no subsidy from the UK. It raised tax monies from copra and other exports, along with excise,

[34] S.G.C. Knibbs, Crown Surveyor and Registrar of Lands, 1915-39. See Golden (1993).

levies and licence fees. “You couldn’t educate people properly. There were only two doctors in the whole place” (Knox Mawer, 1986, p. 62), he lamented of the pre-war BSIP environment.

Come what may, the manner in which the islands of the BSIP had been conquered brought about significant local problems for the ‘native’ people and, in an extraordinarily honest appraisal in 1934, the Resident Commissioner told his Advisory Council that “The impact of the European has been so violent that the whole fabric of their indigenous society has been broken to pieces; their old beliefs and customs completely shattered before the advances of Christianity and English Law” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1934, October 23 , p. 30).

Scattered topography

Stretching some 1,500 kilometres in length from the Shortland Islands in the west to the tiny island of Tikopia in the east, the Solomon Islands archipelago encompasses an area of about “777,000 square kilometres, of which 96 percent is sea” (Bennett, 1987, p. 5). The sheer geographical extent of the chain, highlighted by the fact that it primarily comprises thousands of small islands, lagoons and atolls set in a vast ocean, ensured that it was always a colonial possession at the edge of the British Empire. However, the landscape also made it an ideal candidate for the potential use of wireless as a tool of instant communication between the capital and the villages, between the government and the governed, between those people leading an economy-oriented urban existence and those living a traditional, subsistence lifestyle. Alas, it was years before this far-reaching technology was introduced.

Tourism has been encouraged in Solomon Islands for over a century, visitors being swayed in the early days of the BSIP’s existence by the promise of a potentially dangerous environment, but one in which they could indulge the pleasure of viewing flora, fauna and primitive lifestyles from the safety and comfort of their visiting steamship. “The charms of those curving contours of coasts, the terraced hillsides covered with a dense jungle, huge specimens of teak and banyan” (Allen, 1919, p. 263), as one tourist eloquently explained his experiences in 1919. Seventy years later, the Solomon Islands national tourism body was still promoting the country as a remote spot, its logo to encourage visitors continuing to be *The Islands Lost in Time*.

The BSIP capital, Tulagi, was a small settlement on a remote island in this faraway land at 'the end of Empire'.[35] However, as the seat of Government, it was also the first port of call for customs and immigration procedures of any vessels entering the Protectorate and welcomed many visitors to its limited facilities, albeit set in exotic tropical surroundings. "From the deck of the steamer it [Tulagi] stood out in picturesque array, the 'slender coco's drooping crown of plumes' giving the decorative finish to the prospect before us" (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, 1922a, p. 6.) recalled the Rev. Vincent le C. Binet, a long-time resident on the island of Choiseul, when arriving back in the BSIP from furlough in 1922. "Here at Tulagi is the residence of the Government Commissioner: a hotel, a hospital, a wireless station, a gaol, a courthouse and a gallows" (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, 1922a, p. 6).

Of course, this pristine environment had its drawbacks. Another Methodist Missionary, the Rev. John Metcalfe, cautioned newcomers by warning (in 1922) that "People wishing to visit the Solomon Islands should realise that they are coming to a place where the only public means of communication between the islands is B.P.'s steamer, and the only place where appartments [sic] can be obtained is at Tulagi in a third-rate hotel with first-rate prices" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 9, October 25, 1922). The hotel was Elkingtons, a family run facility established in about 1916 and destroyed by fire in 1934.[36]

If a visitor felt inclined to sample a dining or drinking experience away from the hotel or the exclusive ('Europeans only') Tulagi Club, they could wander down to Tulagi's Chinatown area where the *Island Cafe* and *The Ambassadors* served meals to guests at any time of the day (Knibbs, 1929). Near the Sasape end of the island was Stirling's Hotel, a place where "heavy drinkers" (MacNeill, 2000, p. 30) could go as Elkington's brooked no drunken behaviour. Of course, the Tulagi Club was the expatriate's social place of choice. Players back from tennis and golf quenched their thirst there as "Mishaki, the native waiter, [carried] foaming glasses and fizzing bottles on trays [...] insistently demanding that a 'chit' shall be duly signed" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 276).

[35] Despite the isolated nature of the BSIP, those who served there regularly expressed their pleasure at gaining such a posting.
[36] See Moore (2013).

And above all the commercial and Administration buildings, the wharves, the towers of *Tulagi Radio*, the golf course and other facilities, stood the Resident Commissioner's home on top of the highest hill, "The Union Jack flying from a tall flag-pole denoted that the territory was part of His Majesty's Empire" (Knibbs, 1929, p. 22). The Residency was built on the edge of a cliff with a drop of 200 feet from the front lawn, the steep upwards path being a challenge for dinner guests. District Officer, Dick Horton, recalled struggling up the hill in "official dress for dining, which consisted of a white mess jacket and trousers, a black tie and black cummerbund, and wearing mosquito boots" (Horton, 1965, p. 15). Ironically, in 1932, white ant (termite) infestation caused the Residency building to collapse (MacNeill, 2000).

Solomon Islander Jonathan Fifi'i[37] from Malaita, working as a cook and 'haus boi',[38] found pre-war Tulagi "a strange place then" (Fifi'i, 1989, p. 34), operating under what he called "a colonial caste system" (Fifi'i, 1989, p. 34) with all the white people segregated on the hill and the Chinese in Chinatown, while the Solomon Islanders "were at the very bottom of the heap" (Fifi'i, 1989, p. 34). In August, 1942 when war came to the BSIP, Tulagi was almost razed in the fighting between the Allies and the Japanese forces. Fifi'i recalled that a folkloric Malaita ancestress had foretold of this many years before and had passed the message down through oral telling. "Even though Tulagi stands, rising to the sky as the yellow-bibbed lory flies upward, it will be finished forever, it will be no more, and the British will fall" (Fifi'i, 1989, p. 74) she had said. And so it came to pass.

Public servants in paradise

The manner in which colonial officers were selected to serve in the colonies relied as much on luck, good fortune and family connections as professional skill and judgement. Of course, a public school background was mandatory and a Cambridge or Oxford university education desirable. There was no single colonial service in the early 1900s, with recruits seeking individual opportunities for India, Federated Malay States, Ceylon, Hong Kong and so on.

[37] Jonathan Fifi'i (b.1921?-d.1989). Served in the Solomon Islands Labour Corps in WWII. Imprisoned in 1947 as a leader of the Maasina Rule movement. Later became a national politician. Was a Board Member of the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC). See also Moore (2013).

[38] Literally 'house boy' (domestic helper).

In later years, as more specialist employment roles were required in the colonies, rather than a 'generalist' administrative cohort, recruitment took on a different tone, with professionals being recruited for specific tasks. This was especially the situation with the development of radio broadcasting in the colonies. Once a decision had been made by the administration to establish some form of radio service, the Crown Agents in London would be contracted to supply equipment and to recruit expert consultants. Their first port of call was the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which was recognised as being a leader in its field and was, of course, a monopolistic organization in the UK.

Managers, programme specialists and transmission engineers were recruited in London and despatched to the far-flung colonies on two or three year secondments, carrying with them to the tropics intellectual baggage which dictated that they would seek to replicate the BBC model. This single-minded attitude towards how broadcasting should develop was tempered by a complete disregard for the rules of independent editorial control and freedom of expression. As soon as the White Cliffs of Dover had receded from view in the trailing wake of the ocean liner, BBC secondees seemed more than ready to shed the editorial freedoms and values so embraced by not only their former employer, but also the British public and colonial officers themselves, in favour of using official 'news' supplied by the local Government Information Service (GIS).

In the BSIP, the first officers to develop radio broadcasting were all Administration officials with no previous media experience. One was the Secretary to Government, David Trench, another the officer in charge of the wireless telegraphy station, Ron Calvert, the third was a Solomon Islander radio operator, William (Billy) Bennett, and the fourth a young clerical worker, who later became the BSIP's Public Relations Officer, Kay Poole.[39] She was to play a leading role in the development of radio broadcasting in the Protectorate, as will be evidenced in chapter XII.

[39] Katharine (Kay) Slaney Poole (b.1905-d.1983). British colonial official. Lt. in the Australian Army in New Guinea during WWII. Started as a Secretary in the BSIP Administration in 1947 and assisted with the organization and transmission (as announcer) of the first BSIP broadcasts. Became BSIP's Public Relations Officer and, later, Information Officer. Awarded the MBE in 1966 and left the Protectorate that year.

CHAPTER III:
THE PACIFIC AWAKENS TO WIRELESS
(c.1900-1910)

> This ocean, with its islands rising here and there as fruitful stations for man's habitation and industry, forms an almost ideal sphere for the application of 'wireless' as the one practical means for communication with shipping and the chief centres of government and trade in our various possessions.
>
> (*Marconigraph*, 1912, p. 126)

The Happy Isles

The Marconi company's prescient statement in its magazine of 1912 may seem self-evident today, but this was not the case when the journal was first published. Until that time, undersea cable traffic had been the primary method of communicating rapidly across oceans and continents, while wireless was something quite new and, to most, an untested medium of communication.

Politicians and poets had already warmed to the power of the international cable system for disseminating messages, Alfred Lord Tennyson himself, in his 1872 poem, *To the Queen*, lyrically describing messages sent via the trans-Atlantic cable (connected in 1858) as being like "thunderless lightnings striking under sea" (Tennyson, cited in Hill, 1971, pp. 430-431). Inherent in his poem was the perceived belief that the dominance of the British Empire in all things technological was simply taken as an established fact.

However, Tennyson has an interesting, albeit unintentional, link with the South-West Pacific which goes far beyond the Atlantic cable. In his poem *Ulysses*, he writes that:

> It may be that we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles whom we knew. (Tennyson, cited in Hill, 1971, pp. 54)

According to scholars, "'The Happy Isles', or Elysium, were supposed to be in the far west, the abode for the great heroes like Achilles, whom Paris had slain in the Trojan War" (Tennyson, cited in Hill, 1971, pp. 52-54). However, in the 1960s, the name 'Happy Isles' was adopted by the former BSIP District Officer and World War II coastwatcher, Dick

Horton, as the title of his book “The Happy Isles: A Diary of the Solomons” (Horton, 1965). Later, the name *Radio Happy Isles* was used by the national radio network, the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC), as its on-air slogan.

Although wireless was still a long way off, Tennyson was not alone in his awe of the might and majesty of Britain’s technical achievements and the manner in which they could serve Queen Victoria and her reign. The Victorian era was one of rapid technological advancement in Britain and its major Dominions. The author Charles Kingsley poetically saw a linkage between the new technologies and Creation itself. “The spinning-jenny and the railroad, Cunard’s liners and the electric telegraph, are to me [...] in harmony with the universe” (Kingsley, 1851, p. 96). Kingsley believed that there was “a mighty spirit working among us [...] and therefore may be the Ordering and Creating God” (Kingsley, 1851, p. 96). This was very much the ethos of those who left Britain to run the empire’s far-flung territories, a belief in religious righteousness and the benefits of harnessing the ‘mother country’s’ engineering triumphs.

Experiments in wireless

The extraordinarily rapid development of telegraphy and, later, wireless owed much to the countless thousands of physicists, engineers and even amateur ‘tinkerers’ who contributed parts of the jigsaw which led to the invention of telegraphy and, later, wireless. It is almost impossible, in the 21st century, to reach into the past and attribute the invention of one of the world’s most influential technologies to any single person. While one man, Italian engineer and inventor, Guglielmo Marconi, is the best-known for the early commercial exploitation of the technology of wireless telegraphy and telephony through its application in practical situations, his success was built on the previous work of thousands of inventors. Branly, Lodge, Popoff, Volta, Ampere, Faraday, Morse, Maxwell, Fessenden, De Forest, Hertz, Conrad and Poulsen, the list is almost endless (Schubert, 1928).

In the early 1800s, scientist Michael Faraday, called by some the “father of electricity” and the “grandfather of wireless” (Dalton, 1975, pp. 11-12), researched deeply in the fields of magnetism and electricity. Scientists such as Heinrich Hertz took up the challenge of electro-magnetic properties and demonstrated the existence of radio waves (Dunlap, 1927), while others across Britain, Europe and America sought to show that messages could be transferred through wires. There are claims that, as far back as 1816, telegraphy, the precursor of wireless telephony and radio broadcasting, had been shown to have been

a viable form of communication. In that year, in England, Sir Francis Ronalds sent a rudimentary signal of pulses through an “electric telegraph” some eight miles long (Marillier, 1899, p. 351). However, it was not until 1844 that Samuel Morse in the USA despatched a discernible message “What hath God wrought?” (O’Keefe, 1983, p. 827) by way of a telegraph wire and using the code which came to be named after him.

By 1867, the British scientist, James Clerk Maxwell, had recognised that it was theoretically possible to use “the ethereal waves” (Dunlap, 1927, p. 7) to transmit signals. However, before this notion took hold, in 1875 the first words were communicated through wires by Alexander Graham Bell’s new invention, the telephone. There was an astonishing take-up in use of this new technology and, by the year 1900, the Bell telephone system in the USA had grown to such an extent that it had an incredible 676,733 subscribers connected and was transmitting by telephone line between several major American cities (Aronson, 1977).

In 1896, Guglielmo Marconi was able to demonstrate how, without wires, messages could be sent across distances. From a base on the Salisbury Plain in England, he despatched and received wireless messages over two miles and followed this up in the following year with a signal to a ship 10 miles off-shore (Dunlap, 1927). To guard his rights to this major success, Marconi lodged the first British patent for wireless telegraphy, No. 12039, in 1896 (AWA, n.d.). When, in December, 1901 Marconi claimed to have flashed the Morse code letter ‘S’ across the Atlantic from a station in Poldhu, Cornwall to St. John’s, Newfoundland, his fame, not to mention his future fortune, was almost assured. Despite the views of some electronics engineers today that, due to weather conditions, combined with the difficult listening/reception pertaining, not to mention the radio frequency used by Marconi and the time of day and season of the transmission, a trans-Atlantic link would have been technically unlikely (Belrose, 1995), there was such a desire to recognise an international event of this nature that Marconi’s feat was lauded and willingly accepted by an excited public.

Imperial intervention

For the Governmental authorities in the capitals of Great Britain, Germany and France, the possibilities for wireless linkages with the far-flung overseas colonial possessions of their jurisdictions, bringing, as they did, the almost instant passage of messages, seemed like a dream come true. However, as each country favoured a different technical system of

wireless, competing commercial enterprises and national firms looked to receive the support of their home Government in ensuring that they were not disadvantaged by other major players in the race to dominate the global wireless business.

Up until the period when Marconi's wireless telegraphy would be proven as an everyday technology, cable dominated. Massive numbers of submarine and overland cable lines were installed and operated across major parts of the globe by France, Germany, Denmark, Great Britain, Russia, Japan, the USA and other countries. The Atlantic cable, linking Britain with the USA, was established as early as 1858 (Kennedy, 1971). In the case of the distant colonial outpost of Australia, prior to the arrival of the cable the only form of linkage with Great Britain and, indeed, Europe and the USA, was an irregular mailbag delivered by steamship.

In the 1860s, a number of the colonies which comprised pre-Federation Australia approached the Eastern Telegraph Company with a view to having the undersea cable laid from the UK to Australia. "The initiative regarding a telegraph came from the Antipodes" (Barty-King, 1979, p. 38), primarily the Governments of Queensland and South Australia. Despite concerns about the cost of transmitting messages by cable, they approached the company's Chairman, John Pender, who willingly accepted their proposal. The strategic importance of the line was also evident to the British Colonial Office, which saw it as accomplishing the goal of establishing an *All Red Line* global network, in other words, most parts of the British Empire linked "without ever touching foreign soil" (Kennedy, 1971, p. 731).

Cable reaches the Pacific

In 1870, the British Australian Telegraph Company was floated with capital of £660,000[40] (Barty-King, 1979) and, within two years, the cable, which was already laid to Bombay, had reached Port Darwin (then known as Palmerston) in northern Australia via Penang, Singapore and Batavia. In Darwin, it met the Australian Overland Telegraph, a 3,200km line which took the signal south through Alice Springs to Port Augusta in South Australia and was then distributed to States in both the east and west of the country. At the very

[40] British pounds sterling (£) were widely used in the Empire, with variations in value according to the country of use. For example, Australian pounds were often of a higher value than British pounds.

expensive rate of 10/8d.[41] per word, the first message from London arrived on the 23rd June, 1872 (Barty-King, 1979).

The success of the cable drew the authorities in Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to consider another link, this time through the vast Pacific Ocean to North America. Thus, at a conference in 1883, the New South Wales Postmaster-General suggested a submarine cable route from Australia to New Caledonia, Fiji, Honolulu and onwards to San Francisco (Barty-King, 1979). An alternate recommendation was for the cable to pass from Sydney via Norfolk Island and thence to Fiji and beyond. The Royal Navy was called in during the 1880s to survey the sea-bed for the proposed cable and, on the 5th January, 1897, an Imperial Pacific Cable Committee met and decided the route would, for strategic reasons, recognise only British Empire possessions and Dominions and therefore would be laid from Queensland to New Zealand, thence Norfolk Island, Fanning Island and terminate in Vancouver, Canada (Barty-King, 1979).

The Pacific undersea cable was rapidly laid in 1902, the Australian base being at Southport in Queensland. Its overall estimated cost was £2,000,000 which was borne by the Governments of Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Kennedy, 1971) while its control came under a body called the Pacific Cable Board (McDonald, 2006). An extraordinarily lengthy link of the cable, from Bamfield on Victoria Island in Canada to tiny, isolated Fanning Island in the mid-Pacific, a distance of 3,458 nautical miles, was laid by the cable ship *Colonia* in only 18 days (Barty-King, 1979).

The first message sent via the Pacific cable was from the Colonial Secretary in London, Joseph Chamberlain. In it, he recognised the *All Red Line*[42] as being an example of "the spirit of co-operation between the Mother Country and the Colonies" (Barty-King, 1979, p. 139). When commercial traffic on the line began on the 8th December, 1902, cablegram rates were set at 2/4d[43] a word (Barty-King, 1979).

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[41] 10/8d. was ten shillings and eight pence (just over half a pound), a not inconsiderable amount in 1872. For many labourers and factory workers in Victorian England, wages of only £1 per month were considered standard.

[42] So named because it passed only through British colonial territories.

[43] 2/4d. was two shillings and four pence, there being twenty shillings in one pound and 12 pence in one shilling.

Wireless rivals cable

Cable companies were hugely profitable enterprises which received, despite very considerable revenues generated from commercial and Government cable traffic, major taxpayer funded subsidies. Their worth, as vital players in international diplomacy, trade and commerce was recognised by Governments and they were given support accordingly. The cable firms also zealously guarded their monopolistic place in the field of global communications, the arrival of Marconi's wireless telegraphy technology being seen as a huge threat to their commercial and strategic domination. Marconi's Chief Engineer in America, Frederick Minturn Sammis, was later to underline the enormous profits to be made from international telecommunications when he pointed out that the cost of a 3,000 mile long cable was between $7 and $10 million [USD], while a radio telegraphy system could accomplish the same for $600,000 (Sammis, 1912). At a charge of 25 cents per word transmitted, it was calculated by Sammis that two million words would simply cover the depreciation costs of the cable, while the same number of words at half the charge would pay all depreciation and also 35% of investment costs of wireless (Sammis, 1912).

Even before Marconi had demonstrated his trans-Atlantic wireless telegraphy signal in 1901, news of his invention had spread worldwide and queries were flooding in to his headquarters from even the most remote parts of the globe as to the potential costs involved in establishing wireless stations. The American-based illustrated magazine, *Leslie's Weekly*, writing of Marconi's invention, noted that "The Amazon Telegraph Co. enquired on the 11th April, 1899 for terms for the equipment of stations on the Amazon River" ([MS. Marconi 180, 1896-1938 Contracts and agreements file]). Similar letters arrived from interested parties in Canada (Ottawa, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia), while a demonstration of Marconi's equipment was also undertaken on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean. In London, Marconi's firm installed spark-gap transmitter wireless equipment at the Streatham Fire Station as early as 1900 ([MS. Marconi 180, 1896-1938 Contracts and agreements file]), while, in the Pacific, rudimentary spark transmitters were also operational in 1900 at various locations in Hawaii such as Oahu (call-sign HU), Nawiliwili (call-sign NW) and Lahaina (call-sign LA). The stations transmitted on a 600-metre wavelength and were primarily for contact with whaling ships at sea and for direction-finding (Kneitel, 1986).

It quickly became clear to both the cable companies and the wireless telegraphy operators in the UK, Europe and the USA that to gain dominance in the field of global communications would require massive and intense commercial competition, not to mention strong lobbying of Governmental authorities. Recognising that the USA, where extensive experiments in wireless had been undertaken and amateur operators were beginning to enter the field, would be a strong competitor, Marconi sought to pre-empt competition by widely despatching a confidential circular from New York in October, 1899. "The Wireless Telegraph and Signal Co. of Great Britain is the sole owner of patents covering the right to use the latest great electrical discovery, that of telegraphing without connecting wires" ([MS. Marconi 180, 1896-1938 Contracts and agreements file]) his company warned potential entrants in the field. The circular claimed that the Marconi system was fully protected by patents granted "in every civilised country in the world" ([MS. Marconi 180, 1896-1938 Contracts and agreements file]) and that the system had been "in practical and successful operation in England for more than a year" ([MS. Marconi 180, 1896-1938 Contracts and agreements file]).

Indeed, in 1899, Marconi's firm had offered the British Post Office the chance to use his system of wireless telegraphy for a fee of £30,000 a year (Barty-King, 1979). His company envisaged the value of wireless in a place such as the Pacific when, for an additional £20,000, it said "that use could also extend from the United Kingdom to British Possessions overseas" (Barty-King, 1979, p. 129). The British Government baulked at the expense and, when he was not given a licence to operate on land in the UK, the entrepreneur turned his attention to supplying transmitting equipment for shipping and instituted Marconi's International Marine Communication Company Ltd. Even before his trans-Atlantic demonstration, Marconi transmitters could broadcast over 1,000 miles at sea and were in use by many vessels.

Unable to establish a land station within the UK, Marconi, instead, sold equipment to many shipping companies and also developed a land installation in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) in the Pacific, from which he sought, by a rate reduction of 6d.[44] a word, to undercut the message costs of cable operators (Barty-King, 1979). The Hawaiian station, operated by the Inter-island Telegraph Company, first demonstrated its potential in a

[44] 6d. is six pence, half a shilling.

transmission from a suburb in Honolulu (Kaimuku) to the downtown area, following this up with full inter-island connections in 1901 (Papacostas, 2002).

Elsewhere in the Pacific region, especially Australia, recognition of the worth of wireless was rapidly developing. Laboratory experiments based on the earlier work of Heinrich Hertz were undertaken at the University of Sydney in 1888 and the first lecture on the potential of the medium was delivered by Professor R. Threlfall to the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1890 (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972). In 1899, tests in sending messages were held in the 'long room' of the Sydney Post Office and, a year later, two amateurs were experimenting by sending signals across the Sydney suburb of Waverley (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972). However, despite a Post Office engineer, J.Y. Nelson, purchasing a set of Marconi equipment to experiment further, the development of wireless remained frustratingly slow (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972).

Demands from the Pacific

The impetus for change came, ironically, from "Pacific and South Sea Island planters [who] were continually complaining of a feeling of isolation and lack of communications" (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972). At the same time, Germany, which had colonial interests including parts of New Guinea, Solomon Islands (Bougainville), as well as Nauru, Samoa and Marshall Islands, became equally frustrated with waiting for the British to establish a major wireless service. It took matters into its own hands by accelerating the construction of several stations in the region (for example KBN, Nauru, KAP, Samoa, KCA, Yap and KAN, Angaur) and on-board the survey ship, *Planet*, (APL) in New Guinea waters. The main base was a large 'spark gap' transmitter at Bita Paka near Rabaul. This station was able to receive signals from the flagship Nauen transmitter (call sign POZ) in Germany and relay messages across the ocean to its other Pacific colonial possessions (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972).

Meanwhile, before the British authorities had addressed the concerns of its citizens in the South Seas, demonstrations of the technology were getting underway in Australia. In 1901, the first public use of wireless telegraphy in Australia was carried out in Victoria when a shore-to-ship transmission was sent from the Queenscliff lighthouse. Unfortunately, the message, to welcome the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall, had to be

relayed by another ship through semaphore flags as the Royal yacht, RMS *Ophir*, was not equipped with wireless (McCarthy, 2002). However, the demonstration gave impetus to the overall understanding in Australia of the value of wireless telegraphy and its potential in breaking the communication challenges of a geographically large and isolated nation.

While shore-to-ship communication had been achieved, students at St. Stanislaus College in Bathurst, NSW claimed a 'first' in point-to-point overland wireless communication in Australia. On the 9th February, 1904 they successfully sent a message from the College to a receiving station on the tower of St. Michael and St. John's Cathedral, a distance of about half a mile. As the local newspaper, *The National Advocate*, reported "When the first signal came through and the bell rang, the sensation was as if something weird and uncanny had happened" ("Wireless Telegraphy", 1904, p. 2). Under the guidance of their science master, Father Joseph Slattery, the students lauded their experiment by concluding that "when the succeeding signals were received, true to time, there was no longer room for doubting. Wireless telegraphy between the College and the Cathedral was an accomplished fact" ("Wireless Telegraphy", 1904, p. 2).

Governmental ambitions

In 1905, the Commonwealth of Australia introduced the Wireless Telegraphy Act which, in essence, forbade anyone but the Postmaster-General (PMG) from using the technology to send or receive messages, whether in Australia or overseas. It also gave the PMG's Department exclusive rights to grant licenses to 'erect, establish, maintain or use stations and appliances for the purpose of transmitting or receiving messages by means of wireless telegraphy'. A £500 fine, or up to five years' imprisonment, awaited those who went ahead without authorization ("Wireless Telegraphy Bill", 1905, p. 2). Essentially, the government had taken complete control of the technology, despite having limited expertise in its potential and barely any understanding of how it would harness the invention for either its own usage, or the common good.

As an exhibition of its technology, land stations, using Marconi equipment, were erected in 1905 in Devonport, Tasmania and Port Lonsdale, Victoria (Marconi Marine to R. Ferguson January 27, 1964). However, these were only of a temporary nature and, much to the chagrin of Marconi's representative in Australia, Captain L.E. Walker, later had to be dismantled. Walker was an active representative for the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company, regularly canvassing politicians, such as the Premier of Tasmania in 1907,

urging them to adopt the Marconi system ([MS. Marconi 215, Wireless schemes in Australia and NZ]). So confident was the Marconi firm in selling its wares, it had already developed a generic Memorandum of Agreement in 1905 designed for 'the Colonies' in which, *inter alia*, "The Colony shall grant to the Company sole and exclusive right and privilege for the term of twenty-five years' from the date of signature" ([MS. Marconi 180, 1896-1938 Contracts and agreements]). This even included the provision by the Colony concerned of providing 'a suitable piece of land' free of charge for the term of the contract for the erection of Marconi's aerials and equipment ([MS. Marconi 180, 1896-1938 Contracts and agreements]). On his Australian efforts to date, Walker wrote back to his superior, H. Cuthbert Hall, in the London office of Marconi, that he had made up small deputations of prominent people to promote the product, "The last one consisting of my cousin (Senator J.T. Walker), Dr. Little and Colonel Burns (of Burns, Philp & Coy) who are largely interested in New Guinea" ([MS. Marconi 215, Wireless schemes in Australia and NZ]).

In 1909, when the Australian House of Representatives passed a Resolution calling for the construction of wireless stations around Australia's coast, the tender was won by the Australasian Wireless Company, a Telefunken agent (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972). The sum of £4,150 was provided by the Commonwealth for a station in Perth (which opened on the 30th September, 1912) and another £6,150 for the Pennant Hills, Sydney station (which commenced operations on the 19th August, 1912) (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972). Although many ships worldwide were already using Marconi wireless on-board, the first Australasian registered merchant vessels to be equipped were the *Riverina*, *Ulimaroa* and *Zealandia* of the Huddart Parker Line in 1910 (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972). When the Royal Australian Navy destroyers *Parramatta* and *Yarra* left England to join the fleet in the same year, they were also equipped with Marconi equipment, while the warships *Australia*, *Sydney* and *Melbourne* received their communication sets later. Thus, all of the RAN vessels could communicate with each other, but not with the Australian mainland as no land stations existed (Jose, 1941).

Despite the fact that Marconi had claimed absolute copyright over his invention, a huge number of competing systems began to be developed as engineers, commercial firms and enthusiastic amateurs carried out their own experimentation. Competition was intense, lobbying of Governments for specific technical systems to be chosen was widespread and,

eventually, patent infringement cases came to be a lawyers' picnic. This was particularly the case relating to Marconi's patent number 7777 of April, 1900 which "detailed a method to tune a transmitter and receiver to a common frequency to allow communication without interference from other stations operating on different frequencies" (Wenaas, 2007, p. 6). Essentially, patent 7777 detailed the key technical element in the entire Marconi telegraph system and to have this patent violated would take from Marconi's firm the prospects of huge riches and international kudos. It was defended against all-comers at any cost, especially when Marconi established a company (the Marconi Wireless Telegraphy Company of America) in the USA to seek to corner as much of the market share as possible.

Australia was no stranger to wireless inventors, one of those with a Pacific link being a Catholic priest, Father Archibald Shaw. He had been a lay missionary at Yule Island in British New Guinea and, upon returning to Australia and taking Holy Orders, set about the challenge of finding funds to maintain three missions in the South Seas (McMahon, 1988). With a professional background in wireless telegraphy, he designed and manufactured transmitters and receivers, eventually taking out a patent in 1911 to cover his 'Airblast Spark Gap' system (McMahon, 1988). In his on-going efforts to raise funds for missionary work, Shaw became President of the Maritime Wireless Co. (McMahon, 1988), a company based in Randwick, NSW (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972). In 1911, Shaw's equipment was also installed in Papua and even provided to Mawson's expedition to the Antarctic (McMahon, 1988). During the First World War, when the supply of radio equipment from the UK was interrupted, Father Shaw's workshops at Randwick were heavily involved in manufacturing and supplying vital radio technology for the Royal Australian Navy. The Australian official war historian, in complimenting Shaw, noted the great financial difficulties facing the company and commented on its equipment that "the number of ships and lives saved by its means will never be known" (Jose, 1941, p. 443).

Unfortunately, Shaw's relationship with the Postmaster-General Department's radio telegraphy engineer, J.G. Balsillie, (himself an inventor of a system which ran afoul of Marconi patents) (Cleland, 1979) proved disastrous and ended with legal battles over patents issues. Shaw saw his firm become insolvent, while his own life met an untimely and suspicious end.

Australia asserts its place

At the same time, one of the most important players ever to develop on the wireless scene in the Pacific region, Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd., (also simply known as AWA) was beginning to be formed. First mooted in 1912 as a merger between the businesses of German Telefunken and Britain's Marconi Wireless Australian operations, AWA became a fully-fledged entity in 1913 under its first Managing Director and Chairman, Ernest Fisk[45] (Given, 2014). Its birth put to rest a number of complex and acrimonious arguments over patents ownerships fought out between the two international telecommunications giants. However, given the political situation of the time (World War I being declared between Britain and Germany one year later), there was some public uneasiness about Telefunken being involved in the whole merger.

Within a month of war breaking out in 1914, the first Australian military action against Germany was undertaken by an Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) which sailed to German New Guinea and, after an active engagement in which a number of fatalities occurred, destroyed the German South Seas Wireless Company transmitter at Bita Paka near Rabaul (McKenzie, 1941). The wireless section of the ANMEF, led by Radio-Commander, F.G. Cresswell, was supplied with AWA equipment, further reinforcing the Pacific hegemony of the company in the field of radio technology (Myers, 1925).

A corresponding New Zealand military force headed for German Samoa where it took over the capital, Apia, and the German wireless station, KAP. The German cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* stood off Apia at a distance and, in the first recorded action of its kind in the Pacific, proceeded to use their own transmitters to jam the signal of the wireless station, thus not allowing the New Zealanders ashore a chance to report their success (Jose, 1941). Allied naval action was also taken at Yap to put out of action the high-frequency German wireless station (KCA) based there (Pattee, 2013).

[45] Ernest (later Sir Ernest) Thomas Fisk (b.1886-d.1965) was a Marconi wireless operator on-board ships. He arrived in Australia in 1911. There are counter-claims that he either started his own firm, Australasian Wireless Company, which was absorbed into AWA Ltd., or that he was a representative of Marconi Ltd. Later became Managing Director and Chairman of AWA Ltd. See Goot (1981).

The disquiet in Australia about the Telefunken merger and the use in both Australia and the region of its equipment, brought about a statement issued in 1916 by Godfrey Isaacs, Managing Director of the Marconi Wireless and Telegraph Company in London. In a political swipe at the authorities, he noted that the Australian Government's tender in 1909 to Telefunken for coastal stations placed 'large contracts in the hands of the Germans' and that this put them "in a position of considerable advantage" (Isaacs, 1916). He pointed out that the Marconi Company had taken patents proceedings against both the German firm and the Australian Government, the settlement reached being that "an Australian company should be formed which should purchase the interests [of both]" (Isaacs, 1916). Isaacs sought to re-assure the public by making it clear that the new firm, AWA Ltd., had "capital of £140,000 of which the Marconi Company held one-half, the Australians some £62,000, and the Germans about £8,000.' He concluded with the soothing words 'Thus, a complete control of wireless in Australia passed into Australian and English hands" (Isaacs, 1916).

Wireless embraced globally

During this period, the public imagination worldwide had started to recognise the way in which wireless telegraphy could both change lives and save lives. In the USA, the chief meteorologist, as early as 1904, saw that wireless reports from ships at sea "would secure a more thorough forecast relating to the storms approaching from the sea" ("Storms at sea will be foretold on Pacific", 1904). He envisaged that all vessels, within 300 miles of the US coastline, would report in regularly, thus ensuring more accurate forecasting ("Storms at sea will be foretold on Pacific", 1904). In the same year, a 'wireless newspaper' had been developed by the *Los Angeles Times*. Each day, press news was telegraphed from Los Angeles to the island of Santa Catalina, 30 miles off the coast. There, the news was printed and distributed to summer holidaymakers as a daily newspaper, *Avalon Wireless* ("Wireless a Wonder", 1904).

However, this was by no means the first such use of the new medium to print the news. Before the turn of the century, while voyaging on the SS *St Paul* back to England from a visit to the USA, Marconi had his operators in the UK send the latest news to the ship and this was subsequently compiled and printed on-board. The first edition of *The Transatlantic Times* was distributed to passengers, for a donation of $1 to the Seamen's Fund, on the 15th November, 1899 ("SS St. Paul: The Transatlantic Times", n.d.).

In 1909, the loss of the Australian steamer, *Waratah*, on a voyage to England, with the deaths of all 211 passengers and crew, brought about "a tide of public opinion" (Geeves, 1974) calling for ships to be equipped with wireless. However, the success of wireless as a vital part of the fabric of society was only sealed a couple of years later when, on the 14th April, 1912, the SS *Titanic* struck an iceberg in the northern Atlantic. The calls for help sent by the Marconi operators on-board brought several ships to the rescue and, despite more than 1500 souls being lost, some 706 passengers and crew were saved (Dunlap, 1927). The publicity worldwide for wireless as a technology, not to mention the kudos reaped by Marconi's firm, was extraordinary.

The magic of signalling via the ether took a further turn when the Canadian inventor, Reginald Fessenden, transmitted a combination of voice and music from Brant Rock, Massachusetts on Christmas Eve, 1906. His amazed listening audience included crew on board ships at sea and it is often asserted that Fessenden's achievement brought about the birth of radio broadcasting as we know it ("Radio's version of 'who's on first'?, 1970, p.86). However, in keeping with the competitive history of the invention, this transmission has been disputed (O'Neal, 2006), and claims for being 'first' are manifold, another being Nathan Stubblefield from Kentucky in the USA, who is said to have sent "voices and music [...] through the air" ("Radio's version of 'who's on first'?, 1970, p. 86) as early as 1902. The prominent US inventor, Lee De Forest, transmitted phonograph recordings from the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1908, the signals being heard 500 miles away, further reinforcing the way in which wireless technology was developing (Dalton, 1975).

In San Jose, California, Charles 'Doc' Herrold operated, between 1912 and 1917, "a radio station, on the air every day, programming music and talk for an audience" (Hilliard & Keith, 2001, p. 10). In New Zealand, Professor Robert Jack, of the Physics Department at Otago University, broadcast voice and music (the first song transmitted was 'Hello Dearie') on the 17th November, 1921 ("Resounding Radio: the story of radio in New Zealand 1921-1996", 2000). A new era in communication had dawned and it spawned thousands of amateurs across the world who established their own stations and began rudimentary broadcasts to local communities. 'Listening-in', as it was known, became an international pastime. Despite the isolated geography of the small, British-ruled islands of the Pacific, pioneering uses of wireless came surprisingly early to the region and, from the outset, the Imperial authorities were keen to control the medium's use and the content transmitted (Hadlow, 2014b).

BSIP businessmen seek action

Agitation for the development and use of wireless in the British Pacific had, as mentioned earlier, come primarily from planters and missionaries who understood how wireless telegraphy/telephony would not only alleviate communication problems and help to combat loneliness, but would also bring commercial opportunities. A knowledge of steamer shipping schedules, new Government regulations and the price of copra[46] (the major export crop in many of the islands) was important for the expatriates living in remote locations across the vast Pacific Ocean. Even in the French colonies, newspapers in 1905 were calling for the introduction of wireless to augment the "slight cable between Australia and New Caledonia" ("Wireless Telegraphy in the Pacific", 1905, p. 5), one Noumea newspaper noting that the cable was liable to breakage "as was the case a short time ago, so leaving the colony without telegraphic communication for two months" ("Wireless Telegraphy in the Pacific", 1905, p. 5).

Matters began to come to a head in 1909, when British planters in the South Pacific "felt that they had stood enough" (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972) and started to plan for their own private system of wireless communication. The Pacific Radio Telegraph Company (PRTC) was incorporated in London with capital of £60,000 and had the intention of linking the Pacific Islands, Papua, Australia and New Zealand (Given, 2007). News of the venture travelled far and the United States Consul in Tahiti reported to his Government that the people behind the firm were "capitalists who are interested in the extensive phosphate operations on Ocean and Pleasant Islands" ("Wireless bonds", 1909, p. 8). They had contributed $50,000 each to the new company ("Wireless bonds", 1909).

In an explanatory publicity book about its plans, the PRTC proposed to erect two high-powered stations, one at Fiji and the other at Ocean Island, which would have a communicating radius of 1,200 miles (PRTC, 1909). This radius would intersect with smaller stations in Gavutu (BSIP), Vila (New Hebrides), Samarai (New Guinea), Apia (Samoa), Pleasant Island (Nauru), Nuku'alofa (Tonga) and Rarotonga (Cook Islands), thus enabling each to contact the other, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Later stations were planned for Tarawa (Gilbert Islands), Bougainville (New Guinea) and other remote

[46] Copra is the dried flesh of the kernel of the coconut and is crushed to make oil for soap, cooking and industrial purposes.

island possessions. The wireless system chosen by the company was named after its Danish inventor, Valdemar Poulsen, and had been demonstrated in Europe. In 1907, one Australian journal, *The Queenslander*, even considered that Poulsen's system, because of its ease of operation, had overtaken both De Forest and Marconi, the newspaper erroneously reporting that "according to English experts, the Marconi telegraphy is obsolete" ("New system of wireless telegraphy", 1907, p. 42).

In a rather imperious tone in its Company documentation, much of which also appeared as a lengthy, unattributed 'news' article in *The Argus* newspaper (Melbourne) of 18th September, 1909, the PRTC noted that "The commercial value of the Pacific is ignored" ("New system of wireless telegraphy", 1907, p. 3) and that "most Australians are accustomed to regard the Pacific Islands merely as the outposts of naval power- mere ports of refuge, or (at least) inferior coaling stations" ("New system of wireless telegraphy", 1907, p. 3).

Whatever the intent of the PRTC's public relations exercise, it had a rapid impact, causing the then Postmaster-General, Sir John Quick, to call a conference on wireless telegraphy (in Melbourne) for Governmental representatives from Australia, New Zealand and the British colonial administration in the Pacific. Ostensibly, the conference was to discuss a range of options but, as Sir John "refused to hear of a private wireless service" (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972) the outcome was clear.

The conference, under the title *Wireless Telegraphy in the Pacific*, was held from the 15th-21st December, 1909, and its decisions were to decide the way in which the whole future of wireless in the region, especially amongst the British colonial possessions, would develop.

CHAPTER IV:
CABLE MEETS ITS MATCH
(c. 1910-1913)

> It is on record that a famous British statesman and one-time Colonial Secretary, when asked by an envious foreigner how the Colonial Administration brought about the wonderful prosperity that was so apparent in the Dominions and Colonies, curtly replied 'It doesn't; the blighters succeed in spite of us'
>
> (*The Planters' Gazette,* 1920).[47]

Regulation takes precedence

The old adage about never convening a meeting without knowing the outcome seems to have been front and centre of mind when, in 1909, the *Wireless Telegraphy in the Pacific* conference in Melbourne brought together a handful of Government officials and luminaries who would have responsibility for making key decisions on the way in which wireless would be introduced to the region into the future. As with any Government appointed and operated committee, the conclusions were most likely written before the members even began to debate the issues.

The authorities had a strong card up their sleeve in the form of the King's Regulation No. 5 of 1907. In line with Britain's 1904 Wireless Telegraphy Act and the Australian Government's 1905 legal restrictions imposed on wireless ownership and the use of transmitters, the Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner of the Western Pacific, Sir Everard F. im Thurn,[48] had signed-off on a similar law to *Regulate the Installation of Wireless Telegraphy in the Western Pacific* (Wireless Telegraphy Regulations. MSS & Archives 2003/1). King's Regulation No. 5 made it unlawful, without a licence issued by the High Commissioner, to use or establish "any apparatus or installation for the purpose of electrical communication by wireless telegraphy" (Wireless Telegraphy Regulations. MSS & Archives 2003/1) in the British controlled areas of the Pacific, excluding New Hebrides

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[47] *The Planters' Gazette*, the official journal of the Solomon Islands Planters' Association, was published from 1920-23.

[48] Sir Everard F. Im Thurn (b.1852-d.1932) Governor of Fiji and Western Pacific High Commissioner (1904-11). See Moore (2013).

and its northernmost extremities, the Banks and Torres Islands (the latter being part of the jointly ruled British-French Condominium). The regulation applied to the BSIP, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, the Union (Tokelau) Islands, Fanning Island, Washington Island, Christmas Island, Pitcairn Island and, in a grandiose gesture, all other islands in the Western Pacific not being within the jurisdiction of Australia, New Zealand "or any civilised Power" (Wireless Telegraphy Regulations. MSS & Archives 2003/1). Failure to comply with the rules would invoke a fine of £100 and confiscation of equipment (Wireless Telegraphy Regulations. MSS & Archives 2003/1).

As the British authorities in the Pacific had used the 1905 King's Regulation to forestall any commercial ventures into wireless telegraphy and to curtail any attempts by amateurs to develop rudimentary and experimental services, there was some anticipation of the outcomes to be achieved by the 1909 Melbourne conference. By then, many merchant vessels plying the oceans around Australia and New Zealand had wireless on board, but were unable to send messages to land-based connections as no receiving stations existed (Geeves, 1974).

The 1909 gathering brought together a heavyweight representation from the Australian Postmaster-General's Department, including the PMG himself, Sir John Quick, as Chairman, along with the Department's Secretary, Sir Robert T. Scott, and the Chief Electrical Engineer, Mr. John Hesketh. They constituted a formidable trio. Other committee members included Mr. Atlee Hunt, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Captain F. Tickell, representing the Navy, Colonel Whiteside McCay of the Army's Intelligence Corps and Lt. Guy Fanshawe, representing the Admiralty. Minor players were Mr. J.K. Logan, Superintendent of Electric Lines from New Zealand, the Hon. Eyre Hutson,[49] Colonial Secretary in Fiji representing the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, and Mr. J. Milward, Manager in the Pacific of the Pacific Cable Board. With Mr. G.L. Campbell of the PMG's Department as Secretary and Mr. Arthur Mahaffy,[50] Assistant to the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific based in Fiji, also in attendance, there could only have been one outcome (PRTC, 1909).

[49] Eyre (later Sir Eyre) Hutson (b.1864-d.1969) became High Commissioner for the Western Pacific (8 April 1925-November 1929). See Moore (2013).
[50] Arthur Mahaffy (b.1869-d.1919) had previously been based in the BSIP where, in 1896, he was Resident Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner under Charles Woodford. He established the Government station at Gizo in 1900. See Moore (2013).

The conference report noted that submarine cables between Australia, New Zealand and the major powers “had been laid at great expense and worked with remarkable success” (PRTC, 1909, p. 2), clearly an indication that wireless telegraphy would be invited to fill in the gaps in geographical coverage, rather than becoming a commercial competitor. It commended the potential for “radio-telegraphy” (PRTC, 1909, p. 2) due to its cheaper installation and maintenance costs and, in high-handed and condescending colonial tones, the report saw the benefits of this to the smaller British possessions being that they would then be able to correspond “with the great Australasian centres of civilized Government and commercial and industrial activity to which they naturally belong” (PRTC, 1909, p. 3).

Throughout the conference, the members made it clear that they would view any proposals through the prism of an “Imperial aspect” (PRTC, 1909, p. 5), rather than commercial considerations, and that “the question of defence of the British Dominions in the Pacific is one of paramount importance” (PRTC, 1909, p. 5). The matter of governance arose and the conference believed that a key need was for an “improvement of the means of communication for administrative purposes between the British Protectorates and the Administrations” (PRTC, 1909, p. 5), in other words, the office of the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific based in Fiji.

By the time the private sector made its only appearance before the members of the conference through an invited intervention by Mr. J. W. O. Hamilton of the Pacific Radio Telegraph Co. Ltd. (the original instigators of the move to have wireless introduced to the Pacific), the die was cast. Although Hamilton pursued the proposal his company had recommended earlier (using the Poulsen ‘arc system’ rather than Marconi’s ‘spark’) (“Wireless telegraphy Linking Up the Islands”, 1909), it was inevitably to be to no avail. The New Zealand Chamber of Commerce had strongly supported the Pacific Radio-Telegraph Company and had sent a Resolution to this effect to the Australian Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin (“Wireless Stations: New Zealand, Australia and the Islands”, 1909, p. 3), but the conference unanimously agreed that any wireless telegraphy in the “British Western Pacific be established and maintained under direct State control, or through a State agency” (PRTC, 1909, p. 8).

Bureaucratic control

The report of the *Wireless Telegraphy in the Pacific* conference was clear in its strategies and intentions. It noted the importance of wireless for shipping and trade, while, with some

prescience for its time, mentioned tourism, believing that communication with the outside world during voyages "would induce a greatly increased number of travellers to visit [the islands]" (PRTC, 1909, p. 6). Within years, this prophecy was to have some credence with Burns, Philp & Co. advertising regular tourist shipping services to the region. Trips ranged from four to seven weeks in duration and, with fares "from £7 to £36" (Allen, 1919), tourists were promised holidays which included coral and palm trees, but also contact with "interesting native races" (Allen, 1919, p. 26).

In the summary of its seventeen-page report, the *Wireless Telegraphy in the Pacific* conference concluded that high-powered wireless telegraphy stations, each with a physical transmitting distance of approximately 1,000 nautical miles[51] (using a range of frequency wavelengths between 300 metres and 1600 metres),[52] should be established in Sydney (Australia), Doubtless Bay (New Zealand), Suva (Fiji) and Ocean Island. Each station would connect with the other and also pass on messages received from medium-powered stations to be built at Tulagi (BSIP) and Vila (New Hebrides). The latter operations were expected to transmit across a physical distance of more than 500 nautical miles on similar wavelengths as those of the higher-powered stations.

The actual construction expenses of the Australian and New Zealand stations would be borne by the individual Governments concerned, while the Fiji and Ocean Island stations, expected to be £14,000 each, would be paid for by a variety of Governments. The Fiji station would have contributions from Great Britain, Fiji, New Zealand and Australia, while Ocean Island would be funded entirely by Britain and Australia (PRTC, 1909). The BSIP and New Hebrides operations, costing £7,000 each to equip, were paid for by Britain and Australia alone. However, a codicil in the conference report noted that the Pacific Phosphate Company Ltd. on Ocean Island, which was to hugely benefit commercially from the entire scheme, should bear annual running costs for its station. The costs generally were estimated at £4,490 (to meet salaries, fuel, repairs and interest/depreciation) for each of the stations in Fiji and on Ocean Island, while the smaller stations in the BSIP and New Hebrides would cost around £2,420 per annum (PRTC, 1909).

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[51] A nautical mile measured 6,076 feet (or 1,852 metres).

[52] Radio wavelengths (transmission frequencies) recommended by the conference were 300-600 metres for commercial purposes, 600-1,600 metres for naval purposes, and over 1,600 metres for long distances.

BSIP waits for action

Despite the seemingly positive conclusions of the Melbourne conference, the desire of the British planters, missionaries and other expatriates residing in the remote islands of the Western Pacific to have access to wireless telegraphic transmission facilities was not quickly addressed. A correspondent later noted that "the old inertia had set in" (Chambers, E. W. to J. W. Baker, March 18, 1972) and it was not until the rumblings of disturbing international political events in Europe began to become louder that any form of action was undertaken. In fact, the whole question of a possible war had exercised the minds of the mandarins in Downing Street years earlier, a prescient confidential circular having been despatched in 1904 by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, in which all senior colonial administrators were instructed that, in consideration of "defence requirements in connection with installations of Wireless Telegraphy near the coasts of Colonies" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1813/1912), sites for stations must only be chosen "in consultation with the local Naval and Military Authorities" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1813/1912). However, in later correspondence, Cecil Monckton,[53] the High Commission's Fiji-based Superintendent of Telegraphs for the Western Pacific, asked for instructions on how he would implement this ruling as he felt that "It would appear to me to be impracticable on these Islands to place the Stations, so that the masts could not be destroyed by gun fire from ships" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1650/1912. Microfilm 658).

In November, 1910, a full year after the Melbourne conference, the Australian Acting Minister for External Affairs, Senator Findley, wrote in some frustration to the Imperial authorities saying that he was "desirous of seeing the work proceeded with at an early date" ("Australian News", 1911, p. 2). The response from Great Britain came on the 22nd March, 1911 from the Secretary of State who indicated that he had been in touch with the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific in Fiji on the matter. Nothing more was received ("Australian News", 1911). In the meantime, as per the conference plan, Australia went ahead to erect its high-powered station in Sydney, while New Zealand accepted tenders for its Doubtless Bay (north of Auckland) transmitter and, according to the newspaper report, "traffic is already passing through the Government station at Suva" ("Australian News", 1911, p. 2).

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[53] Cecil Charles Fisk Monckton, M.I.E.E. (b.1867-d.1954). Monckton was from an ennobled British family. See Person Page – 41757. (n.d.).

Pacific wireless experiments

In reality, Fiji hosted three wireless telegraphy stations, being Vatuwaqa near Suva (call-sign VPD), Taveuni (call-sign VPF) and Labasa (call-sign VPE) (Hart & Short, 1915). The latter two locations (islands away from the main island, Viti Levu) maintained routine contact with shipping and passed other messages through Suva. Being models for the future development of wireless amongst the British possessions of the Western Pacific, the Labasa and Taveuni stations undertook signals tests in December, 1911 with the ship SS *Levuka* (call-sign VHB) (Hart & Short, 1915) then docked at Lautoka, Fiji's second major port. The *Levuka* used a 2 kilowatt Telefunken set for its communication purposes, whereas the Fiji land-based stations were all of Marconi design. R.C. Farquhar, Officer-in-Charge of the Labasa station, could report that "communication was easily established" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912) and his counterpart in Taveuni, George Apperley, said "atmospherics were practically absent at the time" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912) so reception was also clear.

However, William Kearsley, OIC at Vatuwaqa, had difficulties "no doubt on account of mountainous nature of the country between Lautoka and Suva" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912). The *Levuka's* wireless operator, S.H. Jeffryes, reported good reception from Labasa and Taveuni but "there appeared to be slightly more difficulty in my getting Suva signals than he experienced in receiving mine" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912. Microfilm 656). Earlier in 1911, the *Levuka*, when travelling off Melbourne, had made contact with Suva, a distance of more than 1,800 nautical miles, thus proving the extraordinary worth and consistency of the technology ("The Antarctic Expedition", 1911, p. 6).

During the last quarter of 1912, extensive tests were made with other mercantile marine traffic to check on reception and to further ascertain whether wireless messages could regularly traverse long distances across the Pacific and, at the same time, deal with the atmospheric uncertainties created by weather conditions in tropical climes. The wireless log of the Vatuwaqa station shows communications with the SS *Tofua* (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912. Microfilm 656). "August 13. 9.30pm. Excellent signals from *Tofua*, left Auckland 2pm" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912). A week later, the *Tofua* was in Tongan ports and signals had dropped off considerably. "Atmospherics very strong and jambing [sic] also very bad all night"

(Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912). By the 22nd August, the Vatuwaqa operator was hugely frustrated with "Continuous heavy rain falling on station roof, at times impossible to hear anything" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912). The experiment continued for another week, but the messages from *Tofua* were often 'jambed [sic]' by signals from other ships, such as *Marama* and the *Manuka*, and the main land-based station at Pennant Hills in Sydney (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912). Apart from crowded radio frequencies, with many land and sea-based transmitters broadcasting at the same time, weather commonly played havoc with wireless telegraphy throughout the Pacific. "Fierce thunderstorm, vivid local lightning. Impossible to do any work. Aerial earthed, closed station down" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912), read a cryptic entry in the Vatuwaqa wireless log for 3rd September, 1912.

WPHC moves ahead with caution

As it was vital that the entire wireless telegraphy system be put in place in the region at the soonest opportunity, the High Commission's Fiji-based Superintendent of Telegraphs, Cecil Monckton, used the experiments made from the Fiji transmitters to provide background to the Crown Agents[54] in London who had contracted consulting engineers Preece, Cardew and Snell[55] to oversee construction of the entire Western Pacific scheme. (This firm had earlier supplied the equipment installed in Fiji.) Monckton was concerned about the plan to have his Suva station as the key base for the "compulsory sending of wireless messages [from Ocean Island] to Australia via Fiji" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912) as he felt the location of the Vatuwaqa transmitter "is rather unfortunate" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912), not only from an administrative point of view, but "for obtaining direct communication easily with any of the proposed stations" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912). He specifically noted that the New Hebrides would be difficult to reach from Suva as the signal "would have to be disfracted [sic] around Viti Levu" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912). Monckton therefore considered that Taveuni was best suited to the task of collecting and forwarding messages as that station had a better physical location.

[54] The Crown Agents was an agency established by the British Government during colonial times to supply equipment and services, recruit staff and implement projects for British overseas possessions.

[55] A prominent British engineering firm with a background in implementing a range of projects, including wireless telegraphy, especially in British colonies. (Sir William Preece had been Chief Engineer of the Government Telegraph system in Britain.)

In terms of staffing and salaries for the new service, he recommended that wireless engineers operating the 5 kilowatt stations in the various Pacific locations “should receive £250 a year, rising by £10 to £300” (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.1636/1912).

In their response, Preece, Cardew and Snell disagreed that Taveuni should become the central point for re-transmission of messages received from Ocean Island and they pointed out that the Suva station’s technical effectiveness would be greatly enhanced “if “T” aerials were used in place of umbrella aerials” (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No. 1650/1912 Microfilm 658). Explaining their work in significantly increasing signal output at another colonial location (Colombo, Ceylon)[56] they recommended raising the height of the current aerial system and adding an additional mast 200 ft. high at a cost of about £600 (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No. 1650/1912 Microfilm 658). On the general subject of the establishment of other stations in the Pacific, Preece, Cardew and Snell advised on reducing the envisaged power of the Ocean Island station from 10 to 5 kilowatts and that a machine-shop and spare-parts base should be developed in Suva to service the network (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No. 1650/1912 Microfilm 658).

Recognising that competing technical systems (Marconi, Poulsen, Telefunken etc.) would be in the mix when decisions were made as to which form of wireless telegraphy equipment should be installed in Britain’s colonial Pacific, the publisher of the *Marconigraph*, the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company’s publicity magazine, wrote to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific in 1912, drawing his attention to an article in the latest edition headed *The Pacific as a Field for British “Wireless” Enterprise* (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No. 1636/1912 Microfilm 656). The inference was clear as to the national branding of equipment being suggested.

The article was by Mr. J.W.O. Hamilton, previously representing the Pacific Radio Telegraph Co. Ltd. at the 1909 Melbourne conference and once described as “Marconi’s noisy Australasian critic” (Given, 2007, p. 163). Ironically, through a take-over bid for his previous company, he had now become the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company’s paid representative in Australasia (Given, 2007). Hamilton’s *Marconigraph* article took a jingoistic tone in confidently pointing out that “Throughout the Great Pacific, the British are regarded by the natives as their protectors, and look to us for help in developing their

[56] Ceylon is now the independent nation of Sri Lanka.

lands" (1912, p.126). Further, the article made it clear that "The future of the Pacific Islands is a British responsibility" (*The Marconigraph,* 1912, p. 129) and went on to describe the same wireless proposal as had been explored in 1909, although no mention was made of commercial interests in managing the technology or the system.

Hammering home the point that the British in the Pacific were lagging behind other competitors, Hamilton cited wireless stations being established by Germany and America in the region and helpfully advised that for "the maintenance of our prestige in the Government of these far-off lands and seas" *(The Marconigraph,* 1912, p. 129) a wireless system should be installed with urgency and that its importance "cannot be over-estimated" (*The Marconigraph,* 1912, p. 129). The American radio pioneer, Lee De Forest, had already contended that "Wireless telegraphy will make of the Pacific an American lake" (Schubert, 1928, p. 51) and this type of threat to Imperial ambitions and power added to the overall hegemonic view held within the Britain Empire of its place in maintaining influence, if not dominance, amongst the peoples in the colonial possessions within its scope.

British dominance assured

Anticipating an increasingly complex and competitive wireless environment, not to mention one which was expanding and developing exponentially, the British colonial authorities in Fiji brought in additional rules and regulations to govern the use of the new technology in its Western Pacific fiefdom. With more and more ships throughout the Pacific now carrying wireless telegraphy equipment, knowledge of the usefulness of the invention was well-known to just about every expatriate trader, planter, missionary and Government administrator who had had contact with the visiting mercantile marine of Australia, New Zealand and the UK. In the BSIP, as in other small colonial outposts, the arrival of the regular mail and cargo ship, usually celebrated as 'steamer day', brought expatriates together at the wharf and introduced them to visitors and ships' crews. With them came information gleaned via the new wireless telegraphy systems on-board the vessels, or from land installations back in their home countries. Wireless was "the *new media* of its time" (Hadlow, 2014b) and the pressure on the Government authorities to introduce such means of communication to the most remote areas of the British Empire was becoming irresistible.

In a further effort to retain control of the medium, the King's Regulation No. 9 of 1912 set out *To Govern the Use of Wireless Telegraphy in the Western Pacific* (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No. 2228/1912). It repealed and superseded the rules introduced under King's Regulation No. 5 of 1907 and, while including the same restrictions concerning the installation of radio equipment without a licence as in the previous legislation, added a new dimension, namely the regulation and use "of apparatus for wireless telegraphy on board merchant ships, whether British or foreign vessels, while in the territorial waters of the protectorates, or islands, or places aforesaid" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No. 2228/1912). Essentially, this gave the British colonial authorities throughout the jurisdiction of the Western Pacific absolute control over every aspect of wireless telegraphy. In a codicil to the document, the Secretary to His Britannic Majesty's High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, C.H. Hart-Davis, noted that should that office define that an emergency situation has arisen, Government could take control of wireless transmissions (including from ships) and that further restrictions could be applied "and those rules may prohibit or regulate that use [of wireless telegraphy] in all cases or in such cases as may be deemed desirable" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No. 2228/1912).

Throughout the early months of 1913, debate as to the actual structure of the whole Pacific wireless telegraphy system continued. The consulting engineers, Preece, Cardew and Snell, disagreed with the High Commission's Superintendent of Telegraphs, Cecil Monckton, that Taveuni should become the key station in the network for both the receipt of messages from other Pacific stations and their onwards passage. They pointed out that if this was to be the case, "every message would require repeating to Suva, the destination of all the messages whether for local business, or to be transmitted by cable" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.611/1913) and that this would cause delays and "give additional possibilities of errors in transmission" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.611/1913) Commenting on the tests Monckton had carried out between the land-based stations and the SS *Levuka*, the consulting engineers believed that the station in Suva could be boosted in transmission strength to overcome any problems which might have been envisaged. Despite their reservations of aspects of the pertaining situation, they were fulsome in their praise of Monckton's professional expertise and recommended that he should be in charge of all telephone, telegraph and wireless systems throughout the Western Pacific and that he should have an assistant to provide support in Fiji and to hold the fort when he was travelling (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P.No.611/1913).

By the latter stages of the year, solid progress was finally being made towards the establishment of the wireless telegraphy network as envisaged by the 1909 Melbourne conference. In August, 1913 the Colonial Office, on behalf of the Western Pacific High Commissioner, approached the Crown Agents and asked that the consulting engineers be instructed to prepare specifications so that tenders could be called for the 5 kilowatt stations at both Ocean Island and Tulagi, BSIP. However, as the situation regarding the proposed station at Vila in the New Hebrides had not been resolved, the Crown Agents were asked not to proceed with the actual tendering process until the matter had been settled (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No.1963/1913).

Technology overtakes regulation

In the meantime, events beyond the control of even the hierarchy of the Western Pacific High Commission were beginning to take hold. Since Fessenden's experiments with sending voice and music through the ether from Massachusetts in 1906, a huge wave of amateur inventors and experimenters worldwide had taken an interest in the new technology and had begun designing and constructing their own rudimentary receiving sets and transmitters. In the USA alone, in the period before 1917, there were 5,000 amateurs licensed to operate radio sets which could send and receive signals (Schubert, 1928). In the UK, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, experimentation was taking place at a similar rate with 'listening-in' becoming the sensation of the age.

While the 1920s began the 'golden age' of radio, the previous decade saw extraordinary developments as this 'new medium' was embraced and welcomed as an international tool of communication, peace, education and entertainment. It was not only 'tinkerers' and amateurs who were showing an interest. In 1913, wireless operators along the Atlantic coast of the USA were perplexed "by hearing strains of music wafted through the air" ("Prince who has wireless piano", 1913), and were further surprised when Prince Albert I of Monaco arrived in the port of New York in his yacht, *Hirondelle,* and proceeded to explain that the music came from a 'wireless piano' attached to his vessel's radio set ("Prince who has wireless piano", 1913, p.37).

In the remote BSIP, there was no escaping the worldwide push for the development of wireless, the imagination of a global audience having been ignited by this miraculous medium and its possibilities. Indeed, in the Protectorate it was a private citizen who paved

the way for wireless to commence transmissions from this most remote of British possessions in the South Seas, his application for an operating licence causing the authorities in Tulagi to have to make a decision as to whether to allow non-Government personnel to own a transmitter, or whether to keep total control of both the equipment needed for signalling and the content of the signals themselves. The ubiquitous nature of the technology and the wave of fervour for wireless then sweeping the world made the decision a relatively easy one to make.

CHAPTER V:
GAVUTU ISLAND TAKES TO THE AIRWAVES
(c. 1913-1921)

> This invention [wireless telegraphy and telephony] has great possibilities as regards the dissemination of "propaganda," and there seems some reason for thinking that it may practically supersede newspapers in areas where postal facilities are poor and communications slow. The necessary apparatus for receiving is cheap and simple and its use is well within the capacity of moderate intelligence. (Control of Wireless Broadcasting, 1923, May 26).
>
> The Duke of Devonshire,[57]
> Secretary of State for the Colonies. 1923

Shipping shows the way

Visiting steamers were the first to demonstrate to both their travelling passengers and Protectorate residents ashore the use of wireless telegraphy as a modern means of communication, whether for commerce, official business or personal messaging. In the early days of radio, shipboard operators were often the only people who had the technical facilities to tune to experimental broadcasting stations and they gladly shared this new invention with the general public. "My first experience of hearing radiotelephone signals was on the RMS *Moana* one day out from San Francisco" (Geeves, 1993, p. 8) wrote shipboard wireless operator Harry de Dassell in 1916. "This was a transmission from the Fairmont Hotel, advertising its attractions and playing records. I invited the captain to listen to this new phenomenon, but his reaction was that the ship's engineers were playing a practical joke on me" (Geeves, 1993, p. 8).

Shipping companies proudly advertised in any number of Australian newspapers that their vessels were 'fitted with wireless telegraphy' and both those who travelled on the ships as passengers and the shore visitors who came aboard on 'steamer day' at remote island ports in the Pacific were exposed to the new technology, its advantages and potential. As mentioned previously, as early as December, 1911 the SS *Levuka* was used by the

[57] Victor Christian William Cavendish, 9th Duke of Devonshire. Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1922-24.

Western Pacific High Commission authorities in Fiji to test the reception of its shore-based wireless telegraphy stations. Such was the novelty of wireless, the BSIP's Resident Commissioner in Tulagi, Charles Woodford, even made note of an experience in 1914 when, in a letter to the High Commissioner in Fiji, he wrote, as an excited aside, that the Lever Pacific Plantations Ltd. ship SS *Kulambangra* (call-sign VHA) "has been fitted with wireless apparatus and messages were received by her from Australia during her recent visit to the Protectorate" (Radio license request. WPHC M.P. No. 814/1914). The tyranny of distance[58] had begun to be broken.

Amateur first to transmit

It was to be a member of the BSIP's expatriate commercial community who first brought shore-based wireless telegraphy to the Protectorate. In April, 1913 Cyril Buchanan[59] applied to the Resident Commissioner to establish an experimental wireless telegraphic station at Gavutu,[60] an island close to the BSIP administrative centre, Tulagi. Buchanan had been a crew member[61] on the SS *Upolu*[62] from 1906-1910 and came ashore to be Assistant Manager for Levers Pacific Plantations Ltd. (Golden, 1993, p. 423) at Gavutu. Shortly after Buchanan's request, another resident, a "Mr. Fitzpatrick" (Inwards correspondence. WPHC M.P. No.935/1913), also made an application. In keeping with the usual pace and system of bureaucracy in the British colonial possessions, Buchanan's application was referred to Fiji. Early the following year (February, 1914), the High Commissioner asked Tulagi for an update on the situation and it was not until the 9th March, 1914, almost one year after receipt of Buchanan's application, that a recommendation was forthcoming.

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[58] An expression coined by Australian academic Geoffrey Blainey for his 1966 book *The Tyranny of Distance: how distance shaped Australia's history.*

[59] Cyril Beverley Buchanan, Gavutu, British Solomon Islands. Listed as a non-resident Life Fellow (from 1915) of The Royal Colonial Institute, London. (*Royal Colonial Institute Yearbook*, 1916, p. 107).

[60] Gavutu was owned by Levers Pacific Plantations Ltd. and had a major wharf and cargo depot.

[61] His position on the Upolu was 'assistant, super-cargo'. This was a person employed by the owner of the cargo to oversee its safe passage. ("Local Brevities", 1909, p. 6).

[62] SS *Upolu* was a steamer owned from 1903-11 by Levers Bros. It called every 11 weeks at Levers Plantations in the BSIP (Moore, 2013*).*

In making a decision, the Resident Commissioner in the BSIP, Charles Woodford, pointed out to the High Commissioner, Sir Ernest Bickham Sweet-Escott KCMG,[63] that, after Buchanan had made his application, he had left the Protectorate, apparently for Samoa, (Golden, 1993) and was not expected to return. Thus the delay in the paperwork and the reason for the apparent inertia. However, Woodford now said that Buchanan had returned to the BSIP and "I have now the honour to recommend that a License to erect an experimental station at Gavutu may be granted to him" (Correspondence: Mr. Buchanan's application. WPHC M.P. No.814/1914). In keeping with the cautious nature of the British bureaucracy, Woodford added an important codicil to the permission, namely that "I recommend that the conditions of the License should require that it is to be withdrawn and the station dismantled as soon as a Government installation is completed" (Correspondence: Mr. Buchanan's application. WPHC M.P. No.814/1914). In Fiji, his views were endorsed by the Superintendent of Telegraphs and Telephones, Cecil Monckton, and a document was drawn up for Buchanan's signature (Correspondence: Mr. Buchanan's application. WPHC M.P. No.814/1914).

The first wireless licence issued in the BSIP was ten pages in length and a classic example of the convoluted and bureaucratic Imperial processes of the time. In a mass of legalese, the 'indenture', dated the 27th of July, 1914, gave Cyril Buchanan the right "to establish instal [sic] and work at the stations specified in the Schedule hereto apparatus for wireless telegraphy" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688), as well as to "transmit and receive messages by means of wireless telegraphy between the said stations" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688). In reality, the licence only mentioned one station, Gavutu. The document contained the proviso that the wireless apparatus would be operated solely by Buchanan and only used "for the purpose of conducting experiments in wireless telegraphy" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688). It also contained a secrecy provision, namely that if Buchanan heard any messages "transmitted by naval signalling" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688) or from any other Government stations, the contents of such messages were not to be disclosed. The licence was valid for three years (27th July 1914 to 26th July, 1917) and could be revoked at any time.

[63] Sir Ernest Bickham Sweet-Escott (b.1857-d.1941), Governor of Fiji and Western Pacific High Commissioner (1912). See Moore (2013).

Buchanan's experimental station was given the official name 'Gavutu' and, in the licence, the "character of the apparatus" he was to use was stated as having a "maximum range of signalling" of 20 miles and with the "power (current and voltage)" of 6 volts. The "source of power" was described as "Edison V Type Batteries" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688). The actual brand of equipment to be installed was not specified, but it was likely to have been a 'do it yourself' construction, based on Buchanan's own knowledge of what he observed ashore in Australia or in the wireless room on the SS *Upolu* and other ships. His Gavutu radio station appears to have transmitted during August and into September, 1914 although the then Acting Resident Commissioner, Frederick Barnett,[64] indicated in a letter to Fiji that "as the apparatus is so small and the range limited, I have not been able to make any use of this station" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688).

Unfortunately for Buchanan, his wireless licence, dated the 27th July, 1914 was not to last long. Barnett only returned the signed copy to Fiji in September and, by then, World War I had been declared. Barnett assured the High Commissioner that, because of the declaration by Britain of war on Germany (4th August, 1914), "in accordance with clause 10 of the agreement, Mr. Buchanan is operating entirely under my control and orders" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688). While noting that the equipment was small and the transmission range limited, he went on to indicate that "I thought it as well to be on the safe side and have provided for the immediate demolition and removal [of the equipment] if necessary" (Correspondence: License completion (Mr. Buchanan's application). WPHC M.P. No.2466/1914. Microfilm 688). Buchanan's timing for his pioneering venture into wireless telegraphy in the BSIP was, indeed, unfortunate.

Government wireless station planned

Meanwhile, in late 1913, plans had already been well in hand for the Western Pacific High Commission's Superintendent of Telegraphs and Telephones, Cecil Monckton, to visit the BSIP to advise on where the Government station, to be known as *Tulagi Radio*, should be located. He reached the BSIP on the 5th May, 1914 and immediately began searching for a

[64] Frederick Joshua Barnett (b.1859-d.?) was Acting Resident Commissioner from 1914-1917 (Moore, 2013).

suitable site for the wireless station and transmission mast. Surprisingly, his task did not take long. “I found a site on the afternoon of my arrival” (Mr. Monckton’s report on a site at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.1646/1914) he reported and went on to say that “I satisfied myself that there was no better site for a wireless station on Tulagi” (Mr. Monckton’s report on a site at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.1646/1914). The Resident Commissioner, Charles Woodford, offered Monckton a chance to survey other sites on neighbouring islands by providing a berth on the RSY *Belama*[65] which was leaving harbour the next day. However, while he took advantage of the opportunity to view other locations, his original decision stood.

Monckton’s recommendation was for the five kilowatt wireless station to be built on some of the only flat ground on the island of Tulagi, close to both the sea and available housing sites. This location flew in the face of the Admiralty’s desire to have Government wireless stations sited well away from the shore in case of attacks from the sea during times of war, but there was really no option. He had surveyed several locations on Tulagi but these had various faults, such as being heavily wooded or too rocky to sustain the necessary underground earth wires. Rather than choose a site which might be better from a technical point of view in terms of the height of the masts required, he suggested that a less expensive option would be the flat land on the island and that the transmission masts be raised 50 or 100 feet above that planned to ensure adequate reception when communicating with stations in Fiji and Ocean Island.

The level area chosen for the masts constituted “soapstone overlaid with coral and planted with coconuts” (Mr. Monckton’s report on a site at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.1646/1914). Monckton noted in his report. He had indigenous labourers dig a hole about 50 feet from high-water mark and “At a depth of eight feet, solid soapstone was struck” (Mr. Monckton’s report on a site at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.1646/1914). While he found that the base “was covered by about one and a quarter feet of brackish water at nearly full tide” (Mr. Monckton’s report on a site at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.1646/1914) he did not believe this to be a hindrance to operations. In his report, he sketched a map showing the approximate proposed location of the wireless station and also took the opportunity to “indicate a suitable position for the [living] quarters for the wireless officers at a height about 130 feet above sea level” (Mr. Monckton’s report on a site at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.1646/1914).

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[65] The ‘Belama’ (meaning ‘Frigatebird’ in the Roviana language) was the Resident Commissioner’s official vessel.

Monckton left his report with the Resident Commissioner, Charles Woodford, on the 15th May, 1914 and, even while it was being conveyed to Fiji, plans were in hand for tenders to be opened in the UK to identify a suitable equipment supplier. Monckton's mission, which had taken three months to complete (April-June) due primarily to the need to undertake long sea journeys to and from his base in Fiji, cost the Western Pacific High Commission the sum of £153.6s.10d.[66] This included his salary, allowances and shipping passages. The question of funding within the colonial administrative possessions of the Western Pacific High Commission was always vexed, with each entity expected to raise its own taxes and to balance its financial books. Thus, when unexpected costs were incurred, it was often a contested notion as to whether Fiji headquarters or the individual colonial outpost would meet the expenditure.

In April, 1914 the BSIP Resident Commissioner, Charles Woodford, a proponent of the development of wireless in the Protectorate, could proudly report to Fiji that the collection of Customs Duties for the year had boosted the BSIP's finances to such an extent that he considered the £17,452 gathered as "a most satisfactory result" (Wireless telegraphy to be paid without additional taxation. WPHC M.P. No.968/1914). More to the point, with a five to six thousand pounds budgetary surplus, Woodford could see no reason to impose any additional local taxation "as the funds of the Protectorate will be sufficient to meet the proposed additional expenditure for the installation of Wireless Telegraphy without it, even if it should cost as much as £6,000" (Wireless telegraphy to be paid without additional taxation. WPHC M.P. No.968/1914).

World war hastens development

The drum-beat of an approaching war in Europe was beginning to be heard clearly in London by mid-1914 and this helped to expedite the establishment of the wireless stations planned for the Empire's colonial outposts in the South-West Pacific. Suddenly, the bureaucrats seemed to move rapidly into action. By the 6th June, the Crown Agents in London advised the office of the Secretary of State for the Colonies,[67] Lewis Harcourt,[68]

[66] A not inconsiderable sum and one which the WPHC, on the instructions of Downing Street in London, had to charge to the account of the BSIP, rather than being absorbed by HQ in Fiji.

[67] The Secretary of State for the Colonies role was a Ministerial ranking position within the British Government.

that they had already received submissions for the tendering process for the BSIP wireless station and that, on the advice of the consulting engineers (Preece, Cardew and Snell) the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company Ltd. tender should be accepted. The Minister concurred and gave approval only weeks later, on the 17th July, 1914 (Correspondence with Crown Agents. WPHC M.P. No.2102/1914), just 18 days before the British Empire entered into the Great War.

The wireless station planned for the BSIP was one of several approved by the Secretary of State at the same time, such was the concern of the Imperial authorities that the new technology be in place to bind together the Empire should war break-out. Already, contracts had been made with Marconi for stations in Mombasa, Hong Kong, Singapore and Penang, the BSIP contract being drawn-up alongside those for Ocean Island and Vila (New Hebrides). With minor variations among the several documents, the contractual process went ahead, although the Secretary of State's office noted that Cecil Monckton's report on Tulagi had not yet been received. "As it is possible that a site may not be available on the island of Tulagi", the office pedantically wrote to the Crown Agents, "the words [in the contract] 'at Tulagi' had better be altered to 'at or near Tulagi', if the report does not arrive before the completion of the contract" (Correspondence with Crown Agents. WPHC M.P. No.2102/1914).

The outbreak of war (4th August, 1914) massively disrupted communications and brought shipping traffic in much of the Pacific to an immediate halt. With German raiders and warships loose in the ocean, their whereabouts unknown, the dangers for Allied shipping were too great to contemplate. The lack of wireless communication with parts of the region became problematic and, just three weeks after war was declared, the Australian press was carrying stories of the isolation being experienced in many parts of the South-West Pacific where merchant ships were no longer able to undertake their usual voyages. "Papua is connected with wireless, but in the case of Solomon Islands, residents are completely cut off from the outside world" ("Pacific Islands. Resumption of steamship services", 1914, p. 8), one article noted.

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[68] Lewis Vernon Harcourt (b.1863-d.1922) later 1st Viscount Harcourt. Secretary of State for the Colonies 1910-15. See Person Page – 3576. (n.d.).

As mentioned previously, in September, 1914, one month after hostilities commenced, an Australian military force embarked for German New Guinea, where, following ground fighting which caused casualties on both sides, the radio station at Bita Paka near Rabaul was put out of action. Contemporaneously, a New Zealand force arrived in Samoa and disabled the German wireless station there, while a British man-of-war shelled Yap in the German-controlled Caroline Islands and destroyed the wireless station.

The emphasis placed on the destruction of high-powered wireless stations is clear evidence that the military authorities recognised the strategic value of the technology and its usefulness in times of war. That the German armed raider, *Emden*, attacked and partially destroyed the Australian wireless station on Australia's Indian Ocean territory of the Cocos Islands in November, is further proof that this new medium of communication had truly come of age. The Royal Navy's prescient warnings about the need to place wireless telegraphy stations away from positions potentially exposed to invasion by forces from the sea, or gunfire from battleships, had proved to be correct but, of course, the instruction had not been able to be implemented in a practical sense.

Tulagi Radio **approved**

As the administrative aspects of the tendering process for the wireless station at Tulagi were being finalized and the Marconi Wireless Telegraphy Co. Ltd. in the UK started to construct the equipment to be despatched to the BSIP, attention in the WPHC had turned to the building of a suitable structure to house the transmitting equipment. With increasing urgency on the subject, Cecil Monckton directly contacted the Colonial Secretary's office representative in Fiji who, in turn, passed the concerns down to the High Commissioner (the posts being different in the bureaucratic hierarchy). Clearly frustrated, Monckton wrote that "I think it might be pointed out to the High Commissioner [by the Colonial Secretary's representative] that the contract was about to be executed and that in accordance with the contract (special condition 8) the material was to be shipped in 17 weeks" (Copy of a Minute on the draft contract for the erection of a radiotelegraphic station at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.2911/1914). To further hammer home his argument, Monckton pithily noted that "It is advisable that the buildings should be completed before the plant and engine arrive in the Protectorate" (Copy of a Minute on the draft contract for the erection of a radiotelegraphic station at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.2911/1914).

Monckton was invited to expand on his views and, one month later, delivered a document in which he bureaucratically ensured that he would not be blamed for the perceived deficiencies of others. “In my recommendation of January, 15th 1914” (Copy of a Minute on the draft contract for the erection of a radiotelegraphic station at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.2911/1914), he succinctly pointed out in terms of the Ocean Island wireless station, the UK contractors should immediately talk with the Pacific Phosphate Company in London to commence construction of the transmission building in that company’s island location. In terms of the wireless station in the BSIP, the contract made clear that the Government would be responsible for the construction of basic infrastructure, so Monckton suggested that, if the Acting Resident Commissioner at the time was “unable to undertake to erect the buildings and foundations Departmentally or make any other suggestion, it is possible that Messrs. Burns, Philp, Lever Bros. or Mr. Hollis of Tulagi might tender” (Copy of a Minute on the draft contract for the erection of a radiotelegraphic station at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.2911/1914). To further cover himself, Monckton wrote that “To prevent any chance of the plant for the Solomon Islands arriving before the buildings are ready, I suggest that a telegram be sent to the Secretary of State suggesting that the plant should not arrive until the buildings were ready” (Copy of a Minute on the draft contract for the erection of a radiotelegraphic station at Tulagi. WPHC M.P. No.2911/1914).

While Monckton had cleansed his hands of potential administrative suggestions that any fault lay with him, the wheels of bureaucracy in London had moved forward in such a manner that the issue was now out of his jurisdiction.

On the 9th September, 1914, the contract for the Tulagi radio equipment was signed and sealed. The total contract price to be paid to the Marconi Telegraphy Co. Ltd. “for the construction, supply, delivery and supervision of erection of a radio-telegraph station at or near Tulagi in the Solomon Islands” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690) was a not inconsiderable £4,742.19s.1d.[69] The cost of the technical equipment, including transmitting apparatus and masts, was £4,132.19s.1d., the additional £610.0s.0d. being for the services (including travel) of a Marconi engineer who would be in charge of erecting the station “and to remain afterwards in [the] Colony for 3 months” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690).

[69] It is difficult to calculate this 1914 figure in today’s monetary values. However, an estimate would be in the vicinity of £300,000+.

As part of the deal, the contractors had to guarantee that the new Tulagi wireless installation would be easily able to communicate with both the Ocean Island station and another to be built at Vila in the New Hebrides “during the whole of the night time every night in the year, except only when atmospheric disturbances are such that the working of the Station is rendered impossible” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690). Further, the signals transmitted were “to have a clear musical note of not less than 600 vibrations per second capable of being read at all times, including those of severe atmospheric disturbance” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690). In terms of operating frequencies, the system had to have the capacity of “sending waves of 1800 and 2500 metres on one aerial and 600 metres on the other” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690), with a guaranteed 30 words per minute capability at the receiving end.

Construction begins at Tulagi

The consulting engineers provided the Crown Agents with complete details on what was required to install the plant, including plans for large concrete foundations and necessary trench-work. The sheer scale of this enterprise can be gauged by the fact that Preece, Cardew and Snell specifically pointed out that “the downward pressure on each mast foundation will be 62 tons” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690) and that “the total weight of the battery and stands will be 4-3/4 tons” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690). The two masts for the station were each 253 feet in height, comprising 230 feet of steel “surmounted by 23 feet of wooden topmast” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690). The individual mast sections were 10 feet in length and would be bolted together on-site.

District Officer, Dick Horton, recalled the pre-war masts as being a key feature of the Tulagi landscape and a hazard for golfers playing the 8th hole of the Tulagi golf course. This hole required a “full-power drive which first had to avoid two towering wireless masts and then battle its way forward into the teeth of the wind” (Horton, 1965, p. 19). However, by 1930, the wooden section of one mast was showing signs of wear and tear and was in danger of collapse. During a visit by the warship HMS *Veronica* to Tulagi in September that year, one of the sailors climbed the mast and “cut adrift the wooden section 250 feet above the ground which had been a source of danger for several months” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1930, p. 141).

Following the signing of the 1914 contract, the entire wireless-telegraphy station was assembled in modular form at Marconi's factory in Chelmsford in England, packed into crates and despatched, along with two engineers, by steamship to the BSIP. The two Marconi engineers assigned to the task were Messrs. J.J. Leary and H. Nicholls (Handbook of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1923, p. 55). They arrived in the BSIP, unpacked and installed the equipment, erected the towers and tested the entire wireless-telegraphy station before the end of 1915. The system (known as a 5KW Land Station Type) was used for Government traffic later that year and "officially opened for public use on the 1st of January, 1916" (Handbook of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1923, p. 55). Given that this all occurred during a world war in a remote part of the world where cranes and heavy machinery were scarce, can only be regarded as a remarkable feat of engineering.

Apart from the two towers, the engineers installed, in a fibro-cement building, a Gardner 20 hp engine, transmitter, receiver, high-tension motor-alternator, an accumulator (battery), discharger and automatic switching apparatus in an operating room. The Marconi firm even provided 64 gallons of battery acid packed in 2 gallon jars, 2 lbs[70] of 'Chatterton compound',[71] ¼ lb of Syphon worsted,[72] 5 lbs of assorted wire nails, 2 lbs of 'Ozokerite tape twill'[73] and equipment spare parts for one year (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.2830/1914. Microfilm 690). The modular kit also came with a full range of repair tools, comprising such materials as 12 inches of wicks for a blow-lamp, dusters, chisels, files, wire, solder, flux, watchmakers' oil and varnish.

Tulagi Radio was assigned the call-sign VQJ and transmitted on a frequency of 1800 metres from 7am to 4pm daily and again from 7.30pm on 720 metres. A special listening watch for shipping was kept daily from 10.30am to 11.00am and again from 3.30pm to 4.00pm (Particulars of Wireless Stations. WPHC M.P. No.1743/1923. Microfilm 79-251).

[70] lbs = pounds (weight). Approximately 2.2 lbs are equal to 1 kilogram.
[71] A waterproof, insulating product.
[72] Material used for lubrication.
[73] A kind of wax or paraffin.

BSIP'S isolation broken

Assistant Wireless Operator, A.E. Osborne,[74] who was appointed to the role in 1916 to establish the new *Tulagi Radio* and was promoted in 1922 to become Engineer and Wireless Operator (Golden, 1993), reported in the first post-war Handbook of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (1923) that the wireless station received 391 messages in 1916 and transmitted 245. Between 1916 and 1921, a total of 4,679 messages were sent by the operators at *Tulagi Radio* and 4,261 were received. The cost of sending messages was 1s.0d.[75] a word to Rabaul, Nauru and Ocean Island, and 1s.6d.[76] elsewhere in the world.

Osborne was joined, in 1922, by Arnold Cookson (Appointment of Mr. A. Cookson as Engineer Operator in Charge. WPHC M.P. No.742/1922. Microfilm 79-237), a new recruit from Australia. Surprisingly, Cookson was offered the more senior role at *Tulagi Radio*, namely that of Engineer and Wireless Operator, when interviewed (on behalf of the BSIP Administration) by Burns, Philip & Co. in Sydney. He departed Australia by the SS *Mindini* in March, 1922 to take up the post. On the day of his arrival in the BSIP (20th March), Cookson took one look at the *Tulagi Radio* equipment and, extraordinarily, announced to the Deputy Resident Commissioner that it was different to anything to which he had been accustomed. He quickly suggested that Mr. Osborne, who had been operating the station on his own for the past year, should be given the senior role and he would accept being Assistant. An urgent telegram from the BSIP Resident Commissioner to WPHC Headquarters brought a startled response. "Cookson recommended by Chief Radio Inspector, Commonwealth of Australia; do I rightly understand that he is quite unable to carry on duties connected with appointment?" (Appointment of Mr. A. Cookson as Engineer Operator in Charge. WPHC M.P. No.742/1922. Microfilm 79-237). It was a bizarre state of affairs and, after being assured by Tulagi that Osborne would be able to handle the senior role, Cookson was offered, and accepted, the junior job.

[74] Arthur Edwin Osborne, *Tulagi Radio* Assistant Wireless Operator 1916-21, Engineer and Wireless Operator 1922-45.
[75] One shilling (12 pence).
[76] One shilling and six pence (18 pence).

Wartime restrictions

The war years (1914-18) saw, somewhat naturally, a great number of new and stringent controls in terms of the use of wireless communications worldwide. All amateur, and many non-Government operated wireless systems, were closed-down in Australia and New Zealand, with reports that some operators were even arrested on suspicion of espionage, with equipment being seized. For example, in Melbourne the military authorities raided the residence of "a man of German parentage, in constant touch with his relatives in the Fatherland, to which country he was in the habit of paying frequent visits" ("Hospitality Repaid by Treachery", 1915, p. 40). As a wartime security measure, during October, 1915 officers of the wireless branch of the Postmaster-General's Department were all transferred to the Navy Department "which will in future have control of all radio-telegraphic operations" ("Administrative Notes", 1915, p. 333).

The impact on commercial firms was enormous, as Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd. reported to its shareholders in 1915. Although the company had financially gained from installing wireless sets on Australian troopships heading overseas to Gallipoli and Europe, its half-yearly profit to the end of December, 1914 had been "much disturbed since the commencement of the war" ("Company Notices", 1915, p. 203). AWA Ltd. Managing Director, H.R. Denison, reported that the traffic of messages from ships, which provided the company with major profits, had, unavoidably, fallen off due to "censorship, naval restrictions, the use of some of the Company's subsidy passenger ships for Imperial purposes, and other causes beyond the control of the Company" ("Company Notices", 1915, p. 203).

Interestingly, while Governments installed major shore-based wireless facilities in several parts of the region, it was, as indicated previously, a non-government impetus which hastened the further development of wireless in the South-West Pacific, with both commercial entities and religious organizations (missionary outposts) driving the technology forward. In the case of the BSIP, it was primarily the trading and plantation sectors which sought access to wireless, mainly to ascertain market prices for copra and other products, while also being able to check shipping and cargo schedules. There was, of course, also an interest in war news and, in a story which reported on several Solomon Islands expatriates who had returned to Australia to sign-up for the war effort, it was noted that "War news [in the BSIP] was very 'scrappy', but it is thought that the installation of the

wireless plant, a recent innovation, will fill a long-felt need in transmitting important items of interest and bringing the islands more into touch with the outside world" ("In the Solomon Islands", 1916, p. 3).

There was no doubt that both the Marconi Telegraphy Co. and its antipodean off-shoot, AWA Ltd., were actively working behind the scenes in Australia and New Zealand to promote the possibilities of wireless, with positive progress on their lobbying efforts being regularly reported in Marconi's *The Wireless World* magazine. As an example, at its meeting in Hobart, Tasmania in 1915, the Associated Chambers of Commerce of the Commonwealth of Australia passed a resolution that more (AWA) wireless stations should be established in "British Islands in the Pacific" ("Foreign and Colonial Notes", 1915, p. 481) in light of the fact that "trade between these islands and Australia is increasing and that trade should be encouraged to flow towards Australia" ("Foreign and Colonial Notes", 1915, p. 481).

Pressure from planters grows

At war's end in 1918, Britain and much of its Empire lay depleted and exhausted. The toll taken in lives and material damage was staggering. While the Protectorate had not experienced any first-hand wartime activity in terms of battles or damage, it had been very much a valuable part of the war effort, having exported to the 'mother country' many tons of copra, an important source of oil used in domestic situations and manufacturing. The production of copra would not have been possible without the labours of the thousands of indigenous Solomon Islanders who were employed on the vast plantations owned by major multi-national companies such as Levers (producers of the famous Sunlight Soap brand). In fact, copra was seen as the key source of the Protectorate's future wealth, with one pre-war (1909) newspaper article trumpeting that "There will soon be enough soap made from Solomon Islands copra to wash the world" ("In the Solomons", 1909, p. 7).

One of the most outspoken expatriate bodies in the BSIP continued to be the Solomon Islands Planters' Association (SIPA), a grouping of colonial traders and plantation owners with its strongest voice based mostly around Gizo in the western part of the Protectorate. Apart from promoting the financial and business interests of its members, SIPA continually had in its sights the Tulagi-based civil servants of the Western Pacific High Commission whom it saw as being wasteful with tax monies ("blood-sucking tax gatherers") (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, August) incompetent at governing ("The people are disgusted

with the ineptitude of the Administration") *The Planters' Gazette*, May 1922), and an impediment to the development of the Protectorate ("This Group [BSIP] has arrived at a crisis in its economic history") (*The Planters' Gazette*, May 1923).

SIPA, established in the early 1900s but dormant for some years until revived in 1917, comprised a formidable mass of personalities with an irascible corporate tone. Its journal, *The Planters' Gazette*, was professionally printed in Australia and is, arguably, the first 'newspaper' published and distributed in the BSIP. In its inaugural edition in December, 1920 it thundered to its members that "It does not matter a damn what we say, so long as we all say the same thing" (p. 12).

In an Imperial era of racism and a belief in the superiority of the 'white man', *The Planters' Gazette* had no qualms in distributing 'useful' advice to its readers about relations with the local population. "To understand the natives one must recognise their limitations" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, December), it advised, and went on to insultingly point out that "Most of them are as vain as beauty actors, and as sensitive to ridicule. Play on this trait: ridicule rather than abuse" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, December, p. 12). The writer further suggested that "Generally, a talkative native will give the information sought, provided he does not think one wants it particularly" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, December, p. 12). With a column derogatorily headed *Coconuts and Cannibals* and writers contributing articles which presented such views on the local constabulary as "The swanky, dandy police darlings have quite an unenviable reputation" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, May), there was no doubt where SIPA stood on issues of the day.

Goldie makes his mark

Surprisingly, the Chairman of SIPA, who presumably was aware of the content of *The Planters' Gazette*, was a man who not only claimed to have an excellent and caring relationship with the local population, but was perceived in this way by many of his peers and in the Administration at Tulagi. The Rev. John Goldie[77] was a towering figure of the Methodist Church in the BSIP where he had established the mission at Roviana (Kokegolo), New Georgia in 1902. It has been said of him (ironically, but with a modicum of truth) that, in the Western District of the BSIP, there were three 'Gs', being 'Goldie, God

[77] John Francis Goldie (b.1870-d.1955) jointly established the Methodist Mission at Roviana in 1902 and remained a formidable character for the many years he served in the Protectorate. (Moore, 2013).

and Government' (Moore, 2013) in that order of precedence. His wife, Helena Goldie, was a similarly recognised person, being known as "the White Queen of the Solomons" (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, 1922b, p. 13).

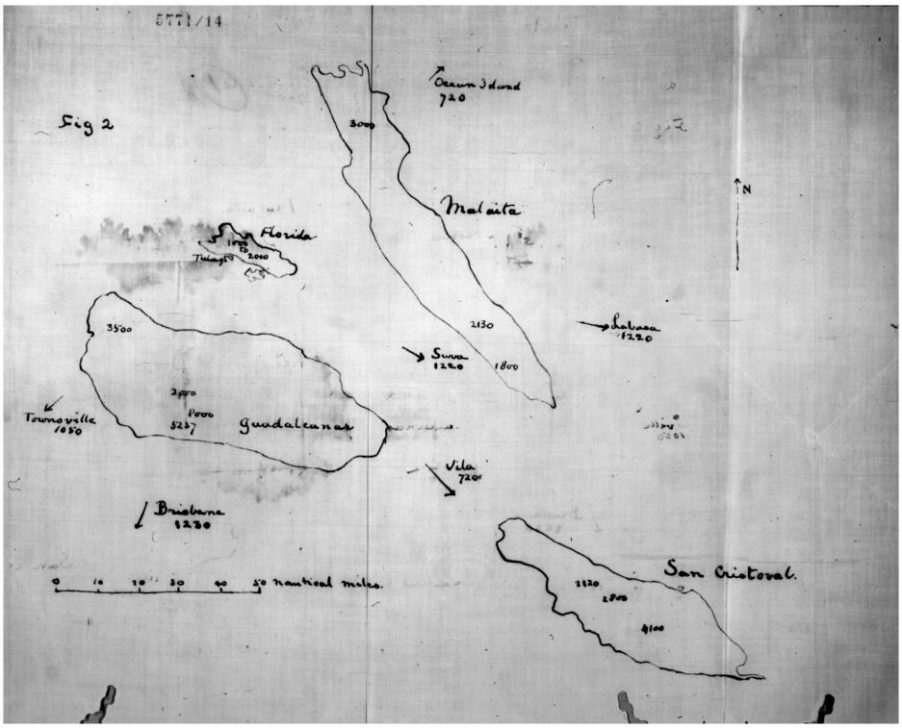
Some of Goldie's Methodist Church colleagues were less generous in their views and provided scathing assessments of his domineering personality and attitude. Accusations of personally humiliating colleagues, of being so single-minded as to be obstructive and even causing endless conflicts with both Government and commercial authorities alike, abounded (Carter, 1973). However, such were Goldie's skills at public relations and self-aggrandisement, an Australian newspaper even considered that "Mr. Goldie, as every visitor to the Solomons knows, is held in the highest esteem by his black friends and this is not to be wondered at, seeing how he has served them" ("Mission pioneer", 1927). The Roviana Mission ran its own copra plantations to raise funds for its work and Goldie turned out to be as difficult to deal with in commerce as he was in religious affairs. The manner in which Goldie operated was unpopular with some other traders (Golden, 1993) who felt that, due to the backing of the Methodist Church in (first) Australia and then New Zealand, his core operational funding was assured, even though his commercial plantation enterprises might fail.

If nothing else, the Rev. John Goldie was very much a practical, 'modern man' in terms of technology and he can take credit for introducing privately-owned, 'commercial' wireless operations to the BSIP. Part of his own professional background, prior to being called to the Ministry, had been with *The Mercury* newspaper in Tasmania and he brought from that career to his missionary role in the BSIP an understanding of the importance of communications, an appreciation of the growing influence and value-add of the new wireless technology and even the usefulness of having printing equipment for the local production of educational and religious materials.

As Chairman of SIPA, it was probably Goldie's influence which brought to the Association a recognition that a lack of communication had caused it to temporarily founder before being revived in 1920. SIPA earlier had branches in Faisi, Gizo and Tulagi, all within several days' steamer travel of each other. However, in a pre-wireless environment, it was simply too difficult to send items rapidly between SIPA members in such a manner that viable discussion could develop, with the result that "when the subject matter finally

returned to the point of initiation, interest in it had evaporated, and the thing was invariably dropped" (*The Planters' Gazette*, December 1920, p. 1).

In 1921, Goldie resigned as Chairman of SIPA in advance of a lengthy tour of Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and Fiji on mission-related duties. However, he used his travels to further his knowledge of wireless and, upon his return, was to initiate what became, in effect, the first wireless station to broadcast music and voice in the BSIP.



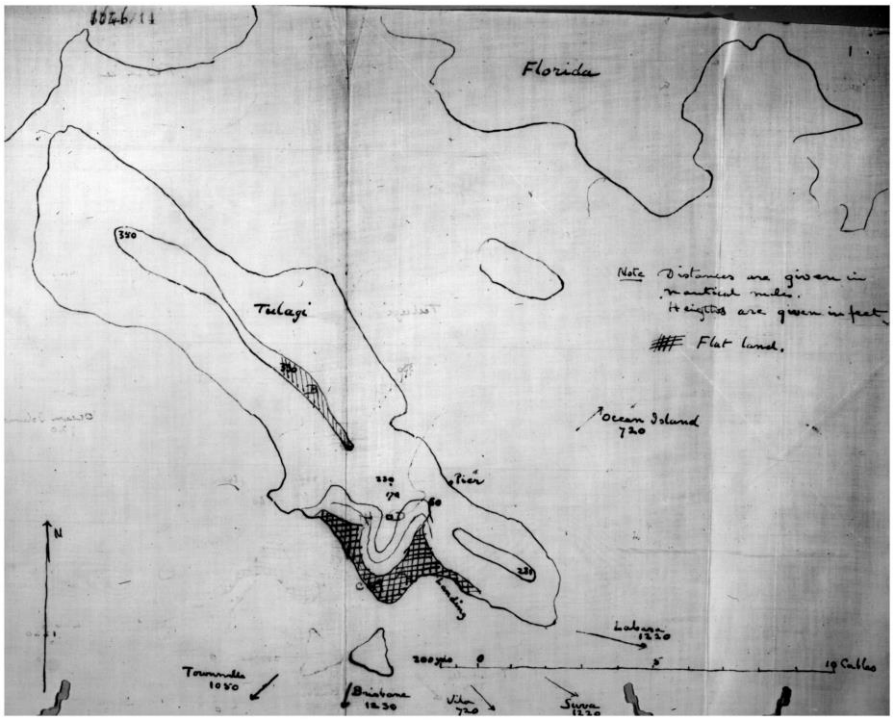


Figure 2: Hand-drawn maps for Tulagi Radio location.

Area maps hand-drawn by Cecil Monckton, Superintendent of Telegraphs for the Western Pacific High Commission, during his visit to Tulagi (5th-15th May, 1914) while planning the location of the Government wireless station, Tulagi Radio.

[Credit: WPHC 4/IV 1914/2466/1914. Western Pacific Archives. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.]

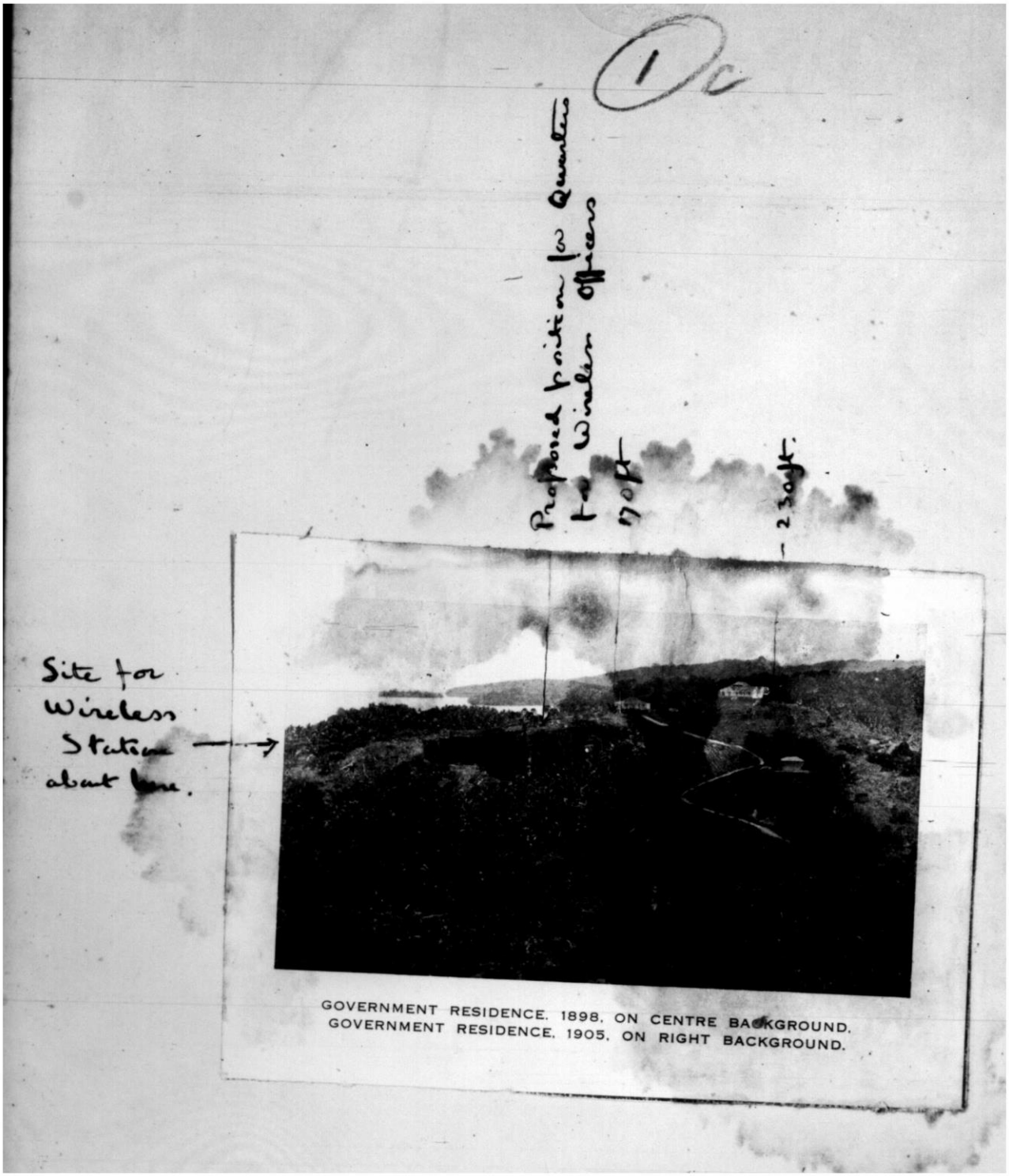
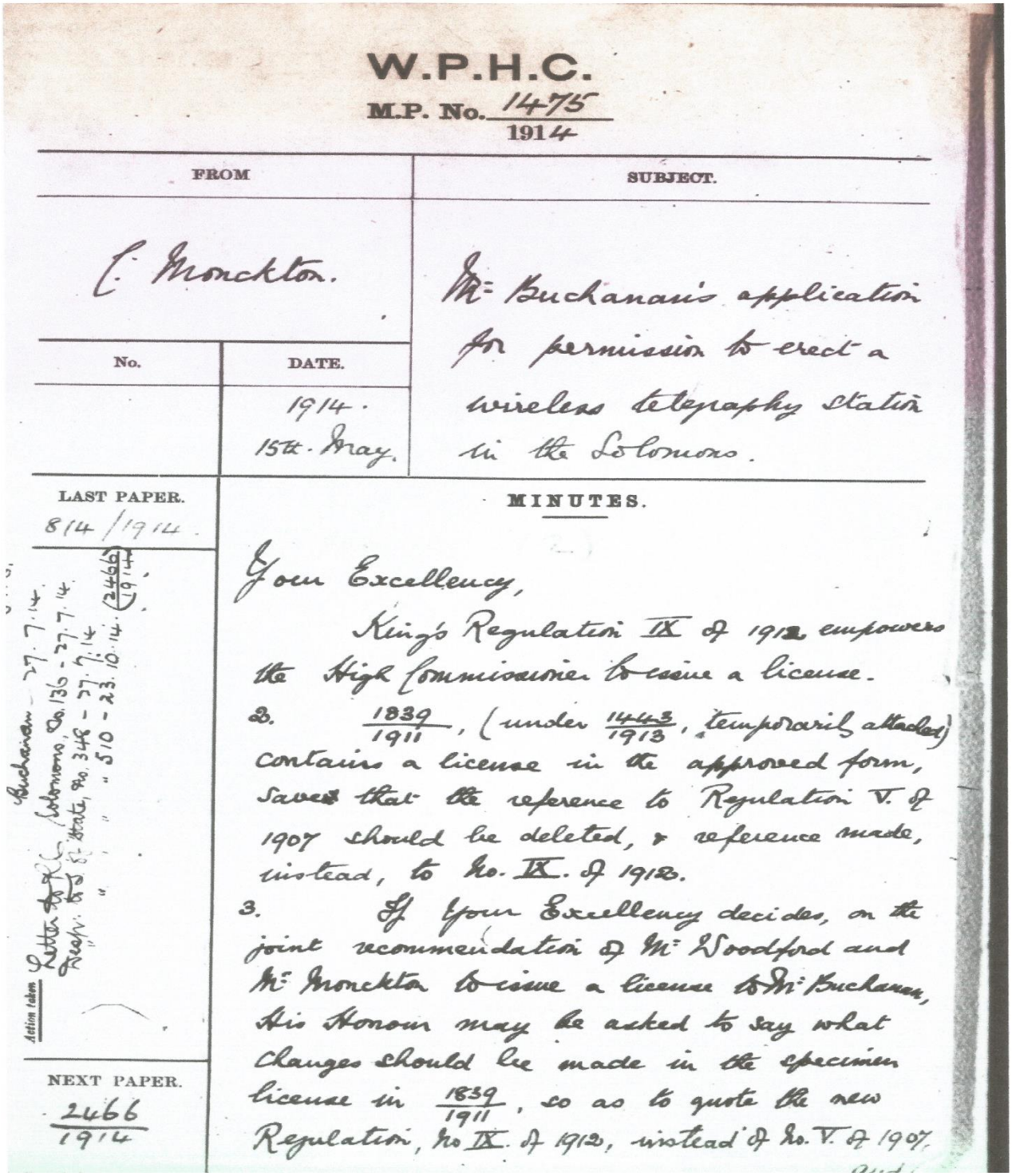


Figure 3: Notes on recommended Tulagi Radio site.

Written notes and a photograph included by Cecil Monckton, Superintendent of Telegraphs for the Western Pacific High Commission, in his report (delivered on 15th May, 1914) to the BSIP Resident Commissioner on a recommended site for the establishment of the Government wireless station, Tulagi Radio.

[Credit: WPHC M.P. No. 1646/1914. Western Pacific Archives. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.]



W.P.H.C.

M.P. No. 1475 / 1914

FROM	SUBJECT.
C. Monckton.	Mr Buchanan's application for permission to erect a wireless telegraphy station in the Solomons.

No.	DATE.
	1914. 15th. May.

LAST PAPER. 814/1914.

Action taken: Letter to H.C. Buchanan - 27.7.14. Resp. to S. of State, Solomons, No. 136 - 27.7.14. " " " " 348 - 27.7.14. " " " " 510 - 23.10.14. (2466/1914)

NEXT PAPER. 2466/1914

MINUTES.

Your Excellency,

King's Regulation IX of 1912 empowers the High Commissioner to issue a license.

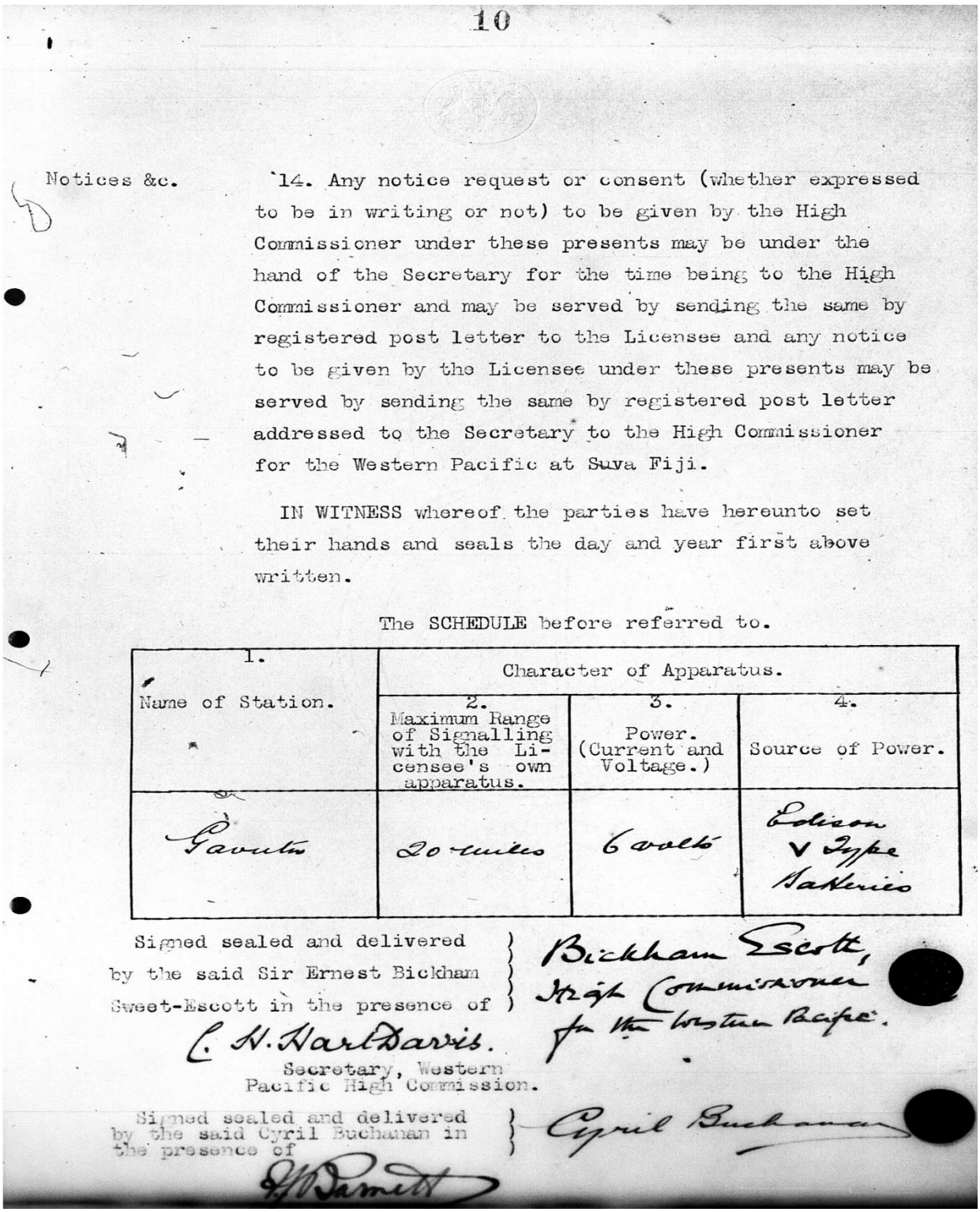
2. 1839/1911, (under 1443/1913, temporarily attached) contains a license in the approved form, saves that the reference to Regulation V. of 1907 should be deleted, & reference made, instead, to No. IX. of 1912.

3. If Your Excellency decides, on the joint recommendation of Mr Woodford and Mr Monckton to issue a license to Mr Buchanan, His Honour may be asked to say what changes should be made in the specimen license in 1839/1911, so as to quote the new Regulation, No IX. of 1912, instead of No. V. of 1907.

Figure 4: Buchanan's application for private station.

Application by Mr. Cyril Buchanan to erect a private wireless telegraphy station (15th May, 1914).

[Source: WPHC 4/IV 1914/1475/1914.Western Pacific Archives. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.]



10

Notices &c.

14. Any notice request or consent (whether expressed to be in writing or not) to be given by the High Commissioner under these presents may be under the hand of the Secretary for the time being to the High Commissioner and may be served by sending the same by registered post letter to the Licensee and any notice to be given by the Licensee under these presents may be served by sending the same by registered post letter addressed to the Secretary to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific at Suva Fiji.

IN WITNESS whereof the parties have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

The SCHEDULE before referred to.

1. Name of Station.	Character of Apparatus.		
	2. Maximum Range of Signalling with the Licensee's own apparatus.	3. Power. (Current and Voltage.)	4. Source of Power.
Gavutu	20 miles	6 volts	Edison V Type Batteries

Signed sealed and delivered by the said Sir Ernest Bickham Sweet-Escott in the presence of

C. H. Hartdavis.
Secretary, Western Pacific High Commission.

Bickham Sweett-Escott, High Commissioner for the Western Pacific.

Signed sealed and delivered by the said Cyril Buchanan in the presence of

Cyril Buchanan

Figure 5: First experimental wireless licence.

First experimental wireless licence issued in the BSIP (27th July, 1914) to Mr. Cyril Buchanan of Gavutu.

[Source: WPHC 4/IV 1914/2466/1914.Western Pacific Archives. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.]

CHAPTER VI:
MISSIONARIES MAKE HISTORY
(c. 1921-1924)

> The wireless also provides the modern equivalent of voices from unseen people, emanating from New Georgia, as travellers by steamer are sometimes regaled through it by the singing of the mission scholars.
>
> King Solomon's Gold (1929, p. 23)

Government holds back the tide

While the Rev. John Goldie of the Methodist Mission at Kokegolo (Roviana) in the remote New Georgia region of the BSIP was on his sojourn away from the Protectorate, he was not a lone voice in grasping the possibilities of wireless. Across the breadth of the Pacific, the potential of the new medium was beginning to take hold, the ubiquitous nature of radio bringing to both the colonialist and the UK citizen at home a comfortable feeling that the British Empire, rather than being a ruthless reaper of economic benefits and of domination and political control, was, in fact, a united and progressive body pursuing well-intentioned ends (McKenzie, 1984). The later use of wireless to broadcast Royal messages around the world, such as at Christmas time or on the occasion of major events, enabled much "pride in Empire" to be fostered on the home front and added to the ideal that Reith's BBC was an "honest, just and pure sower of the seed" (McKenzie, 1984).

However, some parts of the British colonial realm were a little slower than others in understanding the propaganda value of wireless and in taking advantage of the technology. Although the BSIP, Fiji and Ocean Island had been on the air with wireless telegraphy since the war years, it was the post-war period which saw the growth of wireless telegraphy into an everyday reality. Often, developments came in a rush and were based more on catching-up with earlier starters than as part of a co-ordinated plan of action.

For example, in 1919, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific made an urgent request to the Managing Director of AWA Ltd., Mr. E.T. Fisk, for the rapid deployment of an engineer to establish a wireless station at Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Within two months of the

equipment and the technician, Mr. D. Campbell,[78] leaving Sydney by ship, the station, *Nukualofa Radio* (VSB), was operational and part of the Pacific wireless telegraphy network ("At Nukualofa, Tonga, building a Wireless Station", 1924, p. 535). Even remote Pitcairn Island, home of descendants of the Bounty mutineers, received a donated Marconi wireless installation in 1922 and young Pitcairn men began learning to use Morse code, "the advantage [being] that the islanders will be able to ascertain from vessels in the vicinity of Pitcairn whether they intend to stop" ("Wireless Developments.", 1922, p. 4).

Meanwhile, the cantankerous Solomon Islands Planters' Association (SIPA) continued to press the BSIP Administration for action on extending wireless services beyond the capital, Tulagi, its President pointing out that radiograms currently had to be sent (by post or hand) on a steamer to Tulagi where they were relayed "to Rabaul and from there to Townsville or other Australian station" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, August). It was made clear to the Resident Commissioner that this was time-consuming and expensive, with each station taking a financial benefit from the handling of the message to the extent that the cost increased to 1s.11d.[79] per word, as against 6d. a word if the radiogram was sent direct to Australia from steamships "immediately they are outside Protectorate waters" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, August).

In terms of the value of using communication tools to advantage, the points made by SIPA were quite justified. Cheaper rates of messaging would provide great impetus to commercial vibrancy in the Protectorate, not to mention enabling isolated residents to have some form of linkage with the outside world. The fact that a telegram sent from the BSIP itself, using the auspices of the official Government wireless station, would cost almost four times more than a comparable message despatched through the wireless system on-board ships in transit to or from the Protectorate, seems a disparity worthy of reform by the governing authorities.

The BSIP was expected to raise all of its recurrent funding expenditure from local sources, so regulating business to the point of discouraging or hindering it going about its commercial activities shows both the rigid nature of the governing bureaucracy, the

[78] D. Campbell, Equipment Manager, AWA Ltd., Sydney, NSW.
[79] 1s.11d. was one shilling and eleven pence (23 pence in total), almost four times more than the 6d. a word rate available to shipping once steamers had left BSIP's territorial boundaries.

acrimonious nature of the relationship between the private sector and the Administration and, more importantly, the almost complete lack of understanding by the authorities of the manner in which the medium of wireless could be leveraged to advantage. The situation in the 1920s has its echoes in the new digital communications tools of the 21st century, an era in which entrepreneurs, understanding that the value-add of the Internet is about the content it conveys, not the equipment or wires by which it is carried, have been able to reap fortunes and build new enterprises.

Wireless benefits recognised

At the inaugural meeting of the BSIP's Advisory Council held in Tulagi in October/November, 1921 the question of 'Control of Wireless Communication' was placed on the agenda, which was surely in response to the personal and published representations of the SIPA members. The Advisory Council was born out of King's Regulation No. 12 of 1921 and the Acting High Commissioner for the Western Pacific saw this as a forum open to benefit "all classes of the community resident in the Protectorate" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, May, p. 3). However, in keeping with standard Imperial procedures of the time, the only people not represented in person were the 'native' Solomon Islanders themselves.

During the meeting, the Bishop of Melanesia, Bishop John Steward,[80] a nominated member of the Council and one who believed that "the white missionary should be a mediator in the colonial order between governors and governed" (Hilliard, 1978, p. 237), proposed the appointment of a "native advocate" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, May, p. 3) to better represent the indigenous population at such Councils. The matter was not resolved, but deferred for further advice after it was pointed out that existing regulations called for any Advocate to be eligible to be legally appointed to the Western Pacific Bar (there being no Solomon Islanders in that situation), but that enquiries would be made as to whether a Government official (not legally qualified) could fill the role.

Interestingly, in an apparent spirit of democracy uncommon within usual colonial settings and in an attempt to placate troublesome planters and traders, the High Commissioner noted in a message to the Advisory Council that he would "at all times, welcome advice

[80] John Manwaring Steward (b. 1874-d.1937), Fifth Bishop of Melanesia (Anglican Church). See Moore (2013).

freely given by the Council" (*The Planters' Gazette*, May, 1922, p. 3) and he further indicated that the key Council objective was truly a worthy one, namely "the furtherance of the development of prosperity and happiness and the promotion of efficient Administration in the Solomon Islands Protectorate" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, May, p. 3). The word 'happiness' was a surprising one in this highly formal context. Come what may, democracy in the form of happiness was not extended to indigenous Solomon Islanders until thirty years later, 1951 being the year the first 'natives' (Rev. Kaspar Kakaise, Silas Sitai, Milton Talasasa, Jacob Vouza) were appointed to an Advisory Council (Moore, 2013).

On Friday 11th November, 1921 the inaugural Advisory Council agreed that, under its agenda item on wireless, it should ask the High Commissioner to contact the Australian authorities to request that the wireless-telegraphy station in Tulagi could send messages directly to Townsville or Cooktown "or, as an alternative, [agree] to a reduction of the present rate charged for transmission via the Rabaul and Townsville Stations" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1922, May, p. 4).

Methodists grasp the initiative

Meanwhile, a turn of events quite unrelated to wireless had brought about a change in fortunes for the Methodist Mission at Roviana. Previously coming under the responsibility of the church authorities in Australia, from 1st January, 1922 the 'Western Solomons' was established as a geographical region within the administrative control of the Foreign Mission Board of the Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand based in Auckland. At its first annual meeting in January, 1922 the Board was a little taken aback to discover that it needed to tackle a massive financial "accumulated deficiency" (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, January 25-26, 1922), of £22,450 (of which New Zealand owed some £4,000) incurred by its Australian counterparts. Despite this major funding crisis, the Board was able to discuss and approve a number of grants for innovative activities in the Solomon Islands District, including the establishment of a wireless station.

While the Rev. Goldie was not present at the meeting, he had earlier ensured that a delegation from the Society had visited Roviana (in 1920), where he was able to persuade them to provide funds for a portable sawmill, printing press and "small wireless plant" (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, January 25-26, 1922). He had also promoted the agenda ahead of the Board meeting by noting in a letter to the Society's General Secretary, Rev. W.A. Sinclair, that due to potential commercial message traffic 'I

think that the wireless plant would save its own cost in a couple of years' (Goldie, August 17, 1923).

As mentioned previously, Goldie was a forthright and abrasive character whose approach to missionary activities fitted the 'hands-on' ethos of the Methodist Church, but was criticised by some other churches as being "preoccupied with Western-style material progress" (Hilliard, 1978, p. 194). Even his own colleagues found him a difficult character and accused him of being defiant of authority (whether the BSIP Government or even the Methodist Missions in Australia and New Zealand), self-centred, autocratic and as a person who knew best and crushed colleagues who questioned his views or actions (Carter, 1973). His opinion of fellow denominations in the BSIP might best be summarised by a letter to Auckland in which he shared the view that "Seventh-Dayists" (Goldie, August 17, 1923), as he called followers of the SDA Church, were akin to "pests in the vineyard of the Lord" (Goldie, August 17, 1923).

Goldie's chairmanship of the Solomon Islands Planters' Association (SIPA) must have been a clear indication of exactly where he stood in terms of the activities within his bailiwick, but his supporters in Auckland had no apparent doubts that his manner of evangelism was both effective and needing of support. As part of an overall pledge for "urgent and necessary" (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, January 25-26, 1922), works to develop mission activities in Roviana, Vella Lavella and Choiseul in the BSIP, the Board meeting in January, 1922 allocated £500 for the wireless and £1,200 each for the sawmill and print equipment. The funds came from the Waikawau Trust Fund, the Knock Bequest and the Society's Centenary Fund (Goldie, August 17, 1923) but, essentially, the money was a donation by Mr. John Court,[81] a layman and philanthropist.

At the same Board meeting, Mr. E.F. Chivers,[82] who was to later make a major contribution to the establishment of the wireless station, was accepted by the Board as a lay missionary to be based at Roviana. Chivers, a decorated World War I hero and skilled

[81] John W. Court (b.1846-d.1933) of Auckland, New Zealand. Wealthy department store businessman and committed Methodist Mission Society layman. Retrieved from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3c35/court-john

[82] Edgar Frank Chivers, DSM (b.1896-d.1972). A motor mechanic by trade and a decorated serviceman from WWI action in Europe where he won the DSM (equivalent to the Military Cross). As a lay missionary, he became superintendent for all mechanical and engineering work at the Roviana mission.

tradesman who eventually constructed the radio station building and was one of the key wireless technicians and operators, was not to have an easy time of life at Roviana. He ran afoul of Goldie to the extent that the General Secretary, Rev. W. A. Sinclair, had to write to Goldie that Chivers would be given written instructions as to his duties and his relationship to Goldie, "and the necessity of taking and obeying whatever orders you may give him" (Goldie, August 17, 1923). Chivers stayed the distance but, sadly, lost his wife in the BSIP to Blackwater fever[83] in 1927.

Goldie impatient for wireless

Never one to let the grass grow under his feet, Goldie thanked the Board by letter, asked when the money would become available as he was "glad to get on with [it]" (Goldie, August 17, 1923) and immediately contacted AWA Ltd. in Sydney with a request that they make arrangements to not only gain a transmitting licence for him, but to proceed to install a wireless set at his mission station. On the 23rd February, 1922, only a few weeks after the Methodist Mission Society had given its approval for the wireless plant, AWA's Sales Manager in Sydney, Mr. V. Gardiner (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237), wrote to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific in Fiji outlining Goldie's request and seeking a licence for the operation of the station. He pointed out to the High Commissioner that the wireless plant at Roviana would communicate with *Tulagi Radio* and that the reasons given by Goldie for requiring a wireless station included "That the Residents in his district at Gizo are over 200 miles away from the nearest Wireless Station, and are heavily handicapped in business matters, medical attendance etc." Further, he noted that "The Residents have no accurate knowledge of the movements of the Steamers visiting the group, and in order not to lose Mails, Cargo &c. both in and out, they have to spend many idle weeks in the course of the year at the Ports of call waiting for the Steamer's arrival" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237). Gardiner then contended that "They often find it necessary to order goods by wireless, but owing to the one steamer being at their end of the Group just as the other island boat is about to leave for Sydney, it is, more often than not, too late to secure shipment of the things they want, and thereby great inconvenience is caused" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237).

[83] A serious (and often fatal) complication of malaria.

Mr. Gardiner advised the authorities that he understood that the Administration itself was planning to install a wireless station at its Gizo base, but that this would not be of much use to Goldie "as they are 30 miles out of Gizo" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237). He also helpfully pointed out that the wireless apparatus which Goldie intended to purchase would be "a combined Telephone-Telegraph installation and will have a speech range of approximately 200 miles, and a telegraph range of at least 400 miles" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237). The equipment would operate (for both speech and Morse transmissions) on a wavelength of 900 metres. In concluding his letter, Gardiner said that AWA knew of many planters in the BSIP who wanted to establish their own wireless stations and that such facilities would rapidly increase the message traffic, thus revenue receipts, for *Tulagi Radio* and that "the quick communication which will then be possible between Planters and their Buyers will contribute a great deal to the future prosperity of the Solomon Islands" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237).

The letter reached Fiji in March, 1922 but was immediately sent onwards to the Resident Commissioner in the BSIP for his action, the wheels of colonial bureaucracy continuing to move slowly. With no direct shipping between Fiji and the BSIP, the letter took the usual time-consuming route via Sydney. In the meantime, AWA Ltd., mistakenly imagining that the Administration might move rapidly on its request on Goldie's behalf, asked that he (Goldie) be notified of the decision "by Radio via Tulagi and SS *Mindini*"[84] as they understood that he was "anxious to install apparatus at an early date" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237).

Concerns of Resident Commissioner

Unfortunately, the BSIP Resident Commissioner, Richard Kane,[85] took a negative approach to the whole matter and responded in a derogatory sense to his headquarters in Fiji that "I consider that amateurs should not be granted permission to have receiving stations" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237).

[84] SS *Mindini* was a vessel owned by Burns, Philp (South Sea) Co. Ltd. operating between Australian ports and Rabaul and Tulagi. It was declared a total loss in 1923 after grounding on a reef.

[85] Captain Richard Rutledge Kane, MC. (b.1877-d.1958) was BSIP Resident Commissioner from 1921-1929 (Moore, 2013).

He particularly objected to the content of the AWA Ltd. letter in relation to the Rev. Goldie being able to gain useful information through a wireless station. “No free information is transmitted from the Tulagi Station and consequently all paid private messages can be picked up and information gained thereby free of charge” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237) he huffily noted, clearly with an eye to *Tulagi Radio’s* revenue from message traffic being slashed if competitor wireless stations were allowed. Mr. Kane further believed, somewhat surprisingly and with little apparent knowledge of commercial realities, that “Steamers running to the Protectorate would not advise times of arrival without making a charge” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237), thus further confounding Goldie’s plan to have advance knowledge of shipping movements for business reasons. Despite his misgivings, Kane asked the High Commissioner for a sample wireless licence form as “I am of the opinion that, in special cases, if the Government do not establish stations, permits might be granted to public bodies” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237). By the end of May, 1922 the High Commissioner sent Mr. Kane the necessary standard licence form and wearily noted in his reply “I leave it to you to decide whether the licence should be granted” (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.595/1922, Microfilm 79-237).

It eventually became clear to both AWA Ltd. and Mr. Goldie that nothing rapid was to occur. Thus, while the waiting process continued, Goldie ensured that the necessary funds promised by the Missionary Society Board in Auckland were actually made available. This followed a concerning development at the Society’s 10th Annual Conference (in February, 1922) in which it recognised the need for a printing press and sawmill, but that it had “not been able to make financial arrangements for the purchase of this necessary equipment” (Methodist Church of New Zealand, 1922, p. 122). While wireless was not mentioned in the Conference Minutes, it was apparent that funding was tight. In a courageous financial move, Goldie disregarded any potential obstacles and made it known to the Board that the combined telephonic and telegraphic wireless plant recommended by AWA Ltd. would actually require another £250 more than the estimate. In a difficult financial climate, the Board acceded to his request on the proviso that they would slash the same amount from the other equipment Goldie was seeking (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, 1922, May, p. 82).

Bureaucracy causes delays

The whole process of establishing the wireless plant at Roviana proved both laborious and irksome. Clearly, the British colonial authorities had little, if any, experience in authorising the establishment of new technologies and admitted as much in inter-office letters. As the year of 1922 dragged on and the authorities wrestled with licence issues, the BSIP Resident Commissioner, Mr. Kane, began to be inundated with applications from other parties seeking “permission to erect and operate a wireless installation” (Request from private bodies for licenses. WPHC M.P. No.3488/1922, Microfilm 79-245).

Three heavyweight BSIP corporate and religious entities, Messrs. Levers Pacific Plantations Limited, The Malayta Company and the South Sea Evangelical Mission, all sought licences. Urgently contacting the High Commissioner in Fiji in late November, 1922 Mr. Kane said he had agreed to grant the licences but had no idea about fees and charges to be collected. “I have no precedent in this matter for guidance” (Request from private bodies for licenses. WPHC M.P. No.3488/1922, Microfilm 79-245) he admitted. It took almost four months for Fiji to respond, thus holding up the on-going process of purchasing and installing a wireless station at Roviana into another calendar year. “The royalty usually charged is two pounds (£2)” (Request from private bodies for licenses. WPHC M.P. No.3488/1922, Microfilm 79-245), came the short response from the High Commissioner on the 14th March, 1923. It would seem, from both the delay in the reply and the use of the word ‘usually’ (for it was not usual at all) that policy was being made on the run.

In the meantime, while matters were in progress, Frank Chivers, the lay missionary in Auckland being readied for his BSIP assignment, was instructed to undertake training in wireless telegraphy and to also gain some practical experience in operating a saw-mill before making his way to his new posting in Roviana. The Mission Board in Auckland even agreed to refund the cost of his books and training fees to the tune of £20 (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand, 1922, March, p. 79).

The licence log-jam was, for Goldie at Roviana, simply a small bureaucratic hurdle, especially given that the Resident Commissioner, Mr. Kane, had approved a wireless licence but had not yet organised the necessary paperwork. Fortuitously for Goldie, the 1920s was an era when wireless operators aboard ships in the South-West Pacific were actually officers of AWA Ltd., not the shipping line, and, as such, were also representatives

of the company in selling wireless equipment. In March, 1922 while the SS *Mindini* was in the port of Gizo in the Western Solomons, the AWA Sales Manager in Sydney, Mr. Gardiner, arranged for the *Mindini's* wireless officer, Mr. Robert Jordan,[86] to travel to Roviana to view the proposed wireless site. The Roviana installation was to be the first on-shore wireless station established in the Pacific by AWA Ltd. and the firm was very keen for it to proceed, thus gaining regional technical hegemony for the brand in the Pacific and to ensure future sales of their equipment.

Jordan strongly advocated for the purchase of a combination set for both wireless telegraphy (Morse) and telephony (voice), the rationale being that the equipment could be used by operators with no knowledge of Morse code as an ordinary telephone. Further, he offered a financial inducement. "If we order the first set in the islands", Goldie wrote to Methodist Mission headquarters in Auckland, "they [AWA] will abate the price by £100. That is, the price of the combination set is £850, and they will install it for £750" (Goldie, August 17, 1923). This was still well above the £600 allocated by the Mission Society but Goldie, convinced by AWA's arguments, looked to the future and advised Auckland that "for small additional expenditure later on (about £45 per station is the estimate they gave us) we will be able to have small receiving sets at Bilua, Bambatana, Marovo and on [the ketch] 'Tandanya' etc." (Goldie, August 17, 1923).

His pleading tone to Auckland for the additional funds ("I have been wondering whether some of our wealthy men could not finance this extra expense for such a great convenience", Goldie, August 17, 1923) hit the mark and Mr. John W. Court arranged to cover the amount. In fact, Court, who had earlier undertaken a journey to Roviana with the Rev. W. Sinclair, General-Secretary of the Methodist Society, funded both the wireless station and the sawmill after being impressed by what he had seen in the BSIP ("An Up-to-date Mission Field", 1923, p. 2).

Equipment ordered for Roviana

By July, 1922 the licence issue was still not resolved and, while authorization had not been granted, Goldie reported that "the wireless people seem very confident that it will be alright" (Goldie, August 17, 1923). A month later, he was able to advise that "I have not yet

[86] Robert Jordan (b.?-d.1928). New Zealand born marine wireless operator who was engineer-operator at Melbourne and Port Moresby radio stations. Joined AWA Ltd. and served on the SS *Mindini* and SS *Nauru Chief.* (*Examiner*, July 28, 1928, p. 8.)

received the licence from the High Commissioner for our wireless plant, but AWA are pegging away at it" (Goldie, August 17, 1923). However, he had conditionally ordered the wireless equipment and was going ahead with a firm order for the engine which would run the wireless, sawmill and printing press.

On the 29th September, 1922 Goldie finally had some good news. "I have just received word from the Resident Commissioner that the necessary licence has been issued for us to go with our wireless installation" (Goldie, August 17, 1923), he happily reported to Auckland. He then noted that, as he had ordered the equipment from AWA Ltd., he would need to pay them the first tranche of some £400. However, he gently included in the letter some not so good news. This concerned the portable engine which was to power the sawmill, wireless and printing press.

When Robert Jordan, the AWA engineer from the SS *Mindini* visited Roviana, he disagreed with Goldie's plan to locate the wireless station on the top of a hill. Instead, he insisted that it be located on the seashore near the boatshed and workshops as this would provide a better "damp earth connection" (Goldie, August 17, 1923) for the aerial array. The new site, Goldie said in his letter, "was chosen with a view to getting results- and the Company [AWA] is very anxious to make a success of this first private installation" (Goldie, August 17, 1923). The problem was that the new wireless location was too far away from the small powerhouse used for the mission station's electrical lighting system, so a completely new engine would be required. Goldie sold this proposition to the Mission Board in Auckland with a *mea culpa* that he was "most anxious that the Board should not be placed in an embarrassing position at any time through any action of mine" (Goldie, August 17, 1923), so he would await their decision on whether to purchase an engine. All a little too late and the Board had no option but to authorise, at its early November meeting, both expenditure for the engine and the wireless plant.

In the office of the BSIP Resident Commissioner in Tulagi, action on the wireless licence was grinding forward slowly. By the 11th October, 1923 the acting Resident Commissioner, Captain Kidson, had drawn-up a draft licence and despatched it to the High Commissioner in Fiji to await his approval or amendment. It was not until 4th April, 1923, six months later, that a response was returned. The Fiji office had been required to contact London as an edict from the Secretary of State for the Colonies had made it clear that a Committee had been established "to carefully consider the measures to be adopted for ensuring a

satisfactory control of [wireless] messages" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.1759/1923, Microfilm 79-251) and that all colonial administrators worldwide were not to grant any licence for wireless broadcasting "without previous reference to me in every instance" (Inwards correspondence general. WPHC M.P. No.1759/1923, Microfilm 79-251).

Inaugural wireless licence issued

The licence for Goldie's Roviana mission station to use wireless telegraphy/telephony for private purposes was issued under the Wireless Telegraphy Regulation, 1912 on the 4th April, 1924, but was back-dated to 1st August, 1923. Unfortunately, due to the time involved in the bureaucratic procedure, the licence was due to expire on the 31st July, 1924. The annual fee was £2 and the licence stipulations included standard restrictions, such as that signals could only be sent between Roviana and Tulagi (a rule quickly disregarded by Roviana wireless operators who regularly transmitted to operators beyond this range) and that all Government traffic be transmitted free of charge (Wireless licence granted to Rev. J.F. Goldie. WPHC M.P. No.2720/1923, Microfilm 79-255).

In the meantime, in October, 1922 Goldie had been given tacit approval by the authorities to go ahead, while waiting for the proper licence. "The reason for the delay, it appears, was that as this was the first installation of its kind in the South Pacific and there were so many clashing interests, the Commissioner was afraid of granting permission" (Goldie, August 17, 1923), he wrote to Auckland. The AWA representative, Robert Jordan, was already at Roviana and beginning the preparation process, much of the work also being assigned to the lay missionary, technician and builder, Frank Chivers, when Jordan was absent. On the education side, training in Morse code had already been undertaken for several young Solomon Islands men attending the Roviana Mission school, thus allowing them to operate the wireless once it was functional. "Some of the boys have been proficient Morse code signallers for some time" ("First radio", September 15 1923, p.12), wrote *The New Zealand Methodist Times*.

Solomon Islander pioneer

The first Solomon Islander to become adept at using Morse code for signalling was almost certainly Milton Talasasa,[87] then a young man in training at the school in Roviana, but to go on later to a distinguished career in BSIP affairs. By 1926, his skills in wireless saw him take up a key operational role at the mission. Underneath a photo of him in a Methodist Mission magazine published in New Zealand in 1926 was the caption "Milton, a Solomon Island [sic] boy, now in charge of the 'R.A.' radio station" (Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand*,* 1926, p. 1). His professionalism proved especially important during World War II when he volunteered as a wireless operator attached to both Allied coastwatchers and US military forces (37th Infantry Division).

Apart from Morse code training, semaphore (using flags), an activity led by the Headmaster, John Waterhouse,[88] was also an important aspect of school activities at the Roviana Mission. However, while training in Morse code operations continued, by the 1st December, 1922 only part of the wireless equipment had arrived by ship, the remainder to come on the next voyage of the Burns, Philp and Co. SS *Melusia*.[89] Goldie had already arranged with BP's General Manager for the *Melusia* to carry an additional wireless operator, thus allowing Mr. Jordan to be released from the ship to spend more time installing the wireless plant. As payment was needed for the equipment, in December, £616.10s.0d was drawn from the Waikawau Trust in Auckland by the Society's Treasurer ready for Goldie to make the purchase of the wireless station (Methodist Church of New Zealand, December 30, 1922). Another £325 was ear-marked in early 1923 for the engine for the wireless plant and sawmill (Marshall, 1922, December 30).

As each steamer came and went, the disappointment of the Methodist Mission at Roviana grew. Even key supporters back in Auckland became frustrated, the main news organ of the Church, *The New Zealand Methodist Times,* commenting that "The erection of the wireless plant in the Solomon Islands is not yet completed, due to inability to obtain a sufficient supply of cement for the foundations" ("Our Foreign Missions", 1925, p. 12). By

[87] Milton Talasasa of Roviana. Later a village leader and, after World War II service, nominated to be a member of the BSIP Advisory Council.
[88] John Henry Lawry Waterhouse (b.1884-d.1942), head teacher and bandmaster, Roviana Mission. Author of a Roviana-English Dictionary, 1928.
[89] SS *Melusia*, built in 1902, was used on the BSIP run by Burns, Philp and Co. It was sold in 1927 to foreign buyers and was eventually sunk by a mine during World War II.

April, 1923, Goldie had to report that “The engine people have disappointed us again and again, and the Amalgamated Wireless Company has had everything ready for some time” (Goldie, August 17, 1923). He concluded his letter with the Pacific expatriate’s classic forlorn, but optimistic, lament that “I understand the engine will really be on the next boat” (Goldie, August 17, 1923).

While the 24 hp Skandia engine was on its way from overseas, enough cement was found for the concrete footings of a radio shack to be constructed by Chivers and his team at Roviana. The ½ kilowatt Marconi cabinet telephone set was installed and the aerial system also put in place. To anchor the antenna, AWA’s wireless operator, Robert Jordan, and the Mission’s technician, Frank Chivers, had selected “a giant Ivili tree (*Afzelia bijuga*) as a likely pole, and the aerial stretched between it and a tall coconut palm on the sea beach” (Waterhouse, 1924, p. 115). A witness to the rigging of the wires, the Mission’s Headmaster, John Waterhouse, noted that the occasion involved “the unsolicited and un-rehearsed acrobatic activities of a boy named Mailagi, who did aerial stunts on the limb of the tree to which the spreader was attached- at a height of 115 feet!” (Waterhouse, 1924, p. 115). Fortunately, no accident occurred and “The whites present were rather relieved when the agile native reached the ground in safety” (Waterhouse, 1924, p. 115).

First indigenous voices on-air

On Friday 17th August, 1923 the Rev. Goldie was finally able to see all of his efforts, along with those of his Mission colleagues (whom he rarely credited in any correspondence), the Solomon Islander students, fellow workers at the Mission and the financial beneficence of the Mission Society in Auckland, turn from mere words into action. On that day, the first privately-owned wireless telegraphy and telephony station in the BSIP, with the call-sign *RA*, went on the air at the Roviana Methodist Mission at Kokegolo. It was believed to be the first in the world established by a Mission station and “is certainly the first in the Southern Hemisphere” (“Untitled”, 1922, p.3). Arguably, it was also the first occasion on which the musical talents and voices of indigenous Solomon Islanders were ever heard on the airwaves in a ‘live’ public radio broadcast.

The sheer joy and exuberance of the occasion overwhelmed all present, with Goldie excitedly sending a radio message to Auckland, immediately after the official opening announcements, “thanking you for this great boon” (Goldie, August 17, 1923). Finally losing the sense of isolation which had enveloped the Mission Headquarters region for so

long, the first evening transmission from the wireless station included a test concert “and it was quite distinct in Tulagi, and at Rabaul they replied saying that it could not be better. They heard our voices as well as if we were in the same room” (Goldie, August 17, 1923). AWA Ltd. had already instructed its radio operators in Australia to keep an ear out for the first transmissions and reports immediately came in of good reception of the Roviana wireless signals from Auckland, Sydney, Townsville, Rabaul, Ocean Island, Nauru and Tulagi. “The Gizo people asked us to sing for them while the steamer was in Gizo”, Goldie reported, “and they were simply amazed at the clearness with which everything came through. It is all they claim for it” (Goldie, August 17, 1923).

Amid the euphoria of the historic moment, Goldie was careful to ensure that he reinforced his earlier opinion to the Methodist Society in Auckland about the wireless equipment eventually paying for itself. In a letter sent from Roviana a week after the initial broadcast, he noted that it was not a toy and pointed out that they had already used the wireless to find out when the steamer was due to visit Gizo and that this knowledge had saved considerable time because his staff could enter the harbour there with cargo for shipment just as the visiting steamship also arrived. Further, by being able to keep in touch with the copra market “I was able to obtain £1.15s.0d.[90] a ton more than we would otherwise have done for over fifty tons of Mission copra. This will prove to the Board that the installation will soon pay for itself” (Goldie, August 17, 1923).

As well as Goldie’s claims for the commercial benefits of the wireless, the technology was also valued by other missionaries and their families in Roviana as a device for ‘listening-in’ to signals from afar, its most popular use being to listen to broadcasts of Australian church services, such was the monotony and frugality of life at the remote and lonely Mission station (Beniston, 1993). The brass band being trained by Mr. Waterhouse at the Mission School was often called to the radio station. “Sunday afternoon concerts were frequently broadcast and were eagerly listened to by planters and ships in the group” (Luxton, 1955, p. 113) wrote the Rev. Luxton. He also noted that when the regular steamer was in port, special programmes would be arranged for broadcast and “The College brass band and the native choirs provided most of the programme” (Luxton, 1955, p. 113).

[90] One pound and fifteen shillings.

It is also useful to recall that Methodist Missionaries had a propagandist side to their work, so the Roviana wireless strategy fitted nicely into their overall desire to more widely publicise the activities of Methodism in this remote part of the world. Not only did publicity provide valuable moral support for the church internationally, it also ensured that the flow of funds continued from "annual collections in all churches for 'missions to the heathen'" (Davidson, 2006, p. 1). Indeed, one of the most extraordinary coups for Methodist fund-raising in the BSIP related to a propaganda film, *The Transformed Isle* (1924), which was shot on Vella Lavella by a visiting Hollywood film crew in 1917. The film-makers happened to visit on their yacht, the *Fisherman*, and, at the request of the local missionary, the Rev. Nicholson, recorded a fictionalised version of tribal fighting and similar head-hunting scenes (Davidson, 2006). The film remained 'lost' for many years after the American production team took no action to compile it into a feature production and it was left to the Rev. Nicholson (who had, himself, called it 'missionary propaganda') to travel to Los Angeles to retrieve the reels and make the material into a film which was shown widely in Australia and New Zealand to raise funds.

In keeping with both the competitive desire of all the religious faiths operating in the BSIP to be one step ahead of the other, as well as to further the cause of the Methodist ethos that New Zealand wanted to bring the Solomon Islands into the 20th century (Carter, 1973), on the occasion of the first broadcast from Roviana radio on the 17th August, 1923, Goldie proudly concluded his thank you letter to Auckland with the words, "I think we may claim to be the most up to date Mission station in the Pacific" (Goldie, August 17, 1923).

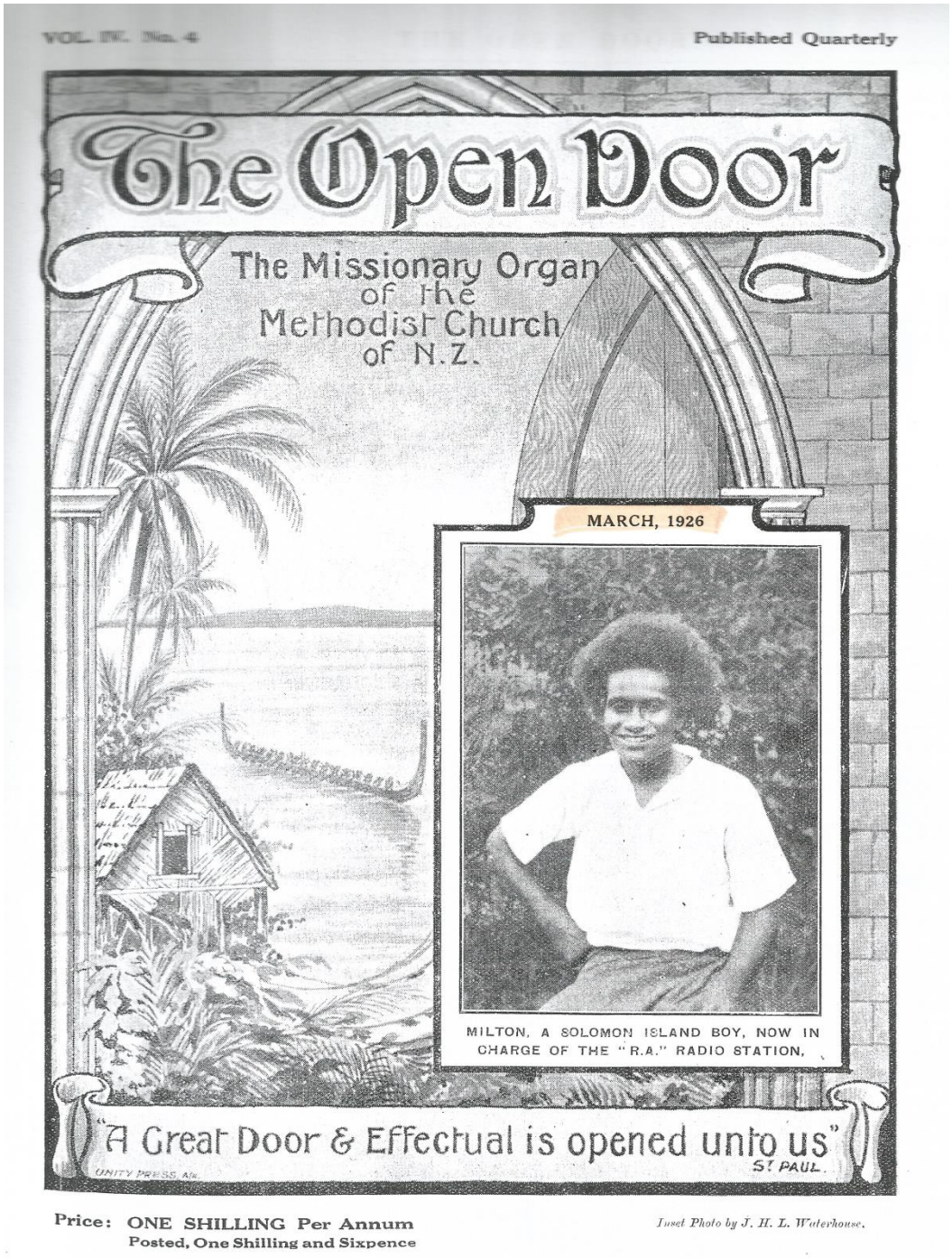


Figure 6: Milton Talasasa, first Solomon Islander radio operator.

Milton Talasasa, the first Solomon Islander to operate the Methodist Roviana Mission wireless station, 'R.A.', which was established in 1923.

[Credit: Methodist Mission Society Archives, NZ]

Figure 7: Wireless station building, Roviana.

Wireless station building, Methodist Mission, Roviana. (c.1923)

[Credit: Sister Lillian De Berry, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, NZ]

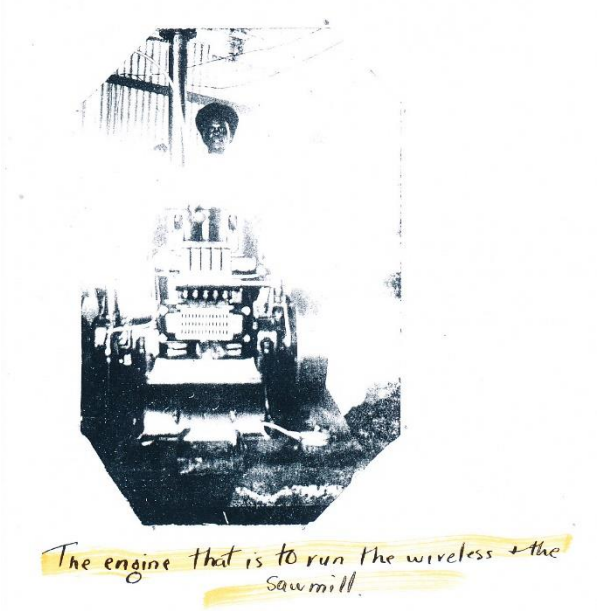


Figure 8: Generator for the Roviana wireless station.

Electricity generating engine (24 hp Skandia) for the wireless station, Roviana. (1923)

[Credit: Methodist Missionary Society Archives, NZ]

Figure 9: First wireless station, Roviana.

The pioneering (1923) wireless station in the BSIP at the Roviana Methodist Mission. Marconi ½ kw cabinet telephone set (telephony/telegraphy) being operated by (l to r) Rev. Don Alley, Rev. Wattie Silvester and (standing) Milton Talasasa. Photo taken c.1936. (Note: Don Alley was interned in Rabaul during WWII and died while being taken to Japan aboard the Montevideo Maru when the ship was sunk by a US submarine. Rev. Wattie Silvester became a coastwatcher on Vella Lavella and was decorated by the US for his WWII services. Milton Talasasa was a radio operator during WWII with the US military.)

[Credit: First wireless in Mission, taken by the Rev. John R. Metcalfe. Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, ANU, Canberra. PMB Photo 42/2/059.]

CHAPTER VII:
RADIO COMES OF AGE
(c. 1924-1930)

> For two periods of about six weeks [1924], our station did all the work of the Solomons while Tulagi was out of commission, and I have the assurance of the Supt. of Telegraphs in Australia that the service was quite satisfactory. Our expensive equipment is still here, but unfortunately owing to the attitude of some of the Officials, and their objecting to work with what men of that type of mind describe as "bloody niggers", we were compelled to close down. (Wireless Students from the BSIP- Training of WPHC 9/11/F.5/3/1 Vol I)
>
> Rev. John F. Goldie, letter to Acting Secretary of Government, BSIP.

Horse shapes policy

The establishment of the wireless operation at Roviana set off a veritable landslide of interest in radio in the BSIP, with both companies and individuals seeking licences to establish their own transmitting stations or to purchase 'listening-in' licences, the latter being the most popular. However, it was not the skill of indigenous Solomon Islanders in using Morse code and learning the complex protocols of international wireless/telegraphic communication which brought about change in official attitudes towards wireless in the BSIP. Instead, it was a horse that unexpectedly forced the colonial authorities to recognize the importance of wireless and to encourage a policy which further decentralized radio facilities away from one central transmitting point at Tulagi.

In July, 1924 the Officer-in-Charge of *Tulagi Radio*, Mr. A.E. Osborne, was badly injured while stopping a runaway horse. Although successful in halting the animal, it kicked him, breaking one leg and inflicting a severe flesh wound in the other (Reports 'Tulagi Radio' temporarily out of action. WPHC M.P. No.1727/1924, Microfilm 79-263). With a two-month hospital stay in view and with the Assistant Wireless Operator, Mr. Cookson, away overseas on leave, the Acting Resident Commissioner, Captain Kidson, was in a very

difficult situation. He urgently wrote to Mr. Cookson recalling him from leave and, at the same time, without any technical or Morse code transmitting expertise available to him, decided to "temporarily put the Tulagi wireless out of action" (Reports 'Tulagi Radio' temporarily out of action. WPHC M.P. No.1727/1924, Microfilm 79-263). However, with a lack of radio communication through Tulagi, Kidson was now reduced to either writing letters (which awaited the next available ship) or sending messages via the only operational radio station in the BSIP, namely the Methodist Mission at Roviana.

Although the soonest Cookson could return to the BSIP was on the SS *Melusia* about a month later (end of August), it seemed that Kidson was not brimming with confidence about his professional abilities to handle the station in Osborne's absence. Kidson wrote to the High Commissioner in Fiji that, as soon as the *Melusia* docked, he would use the ship's wireless to contact Kieta on Bougainville (in New Guinea) "to obtain the temporary services of an operator" (Reports 'Tulagi Radio' temporarily out of action. WPHC M.P. No.1727/1924, Microfilm 79-263). Hardly a ringing endorsement of Cookson's technical capabilities. At the same time, he would ask the *Melusia's* wireless operators to also get in touch with Rabaul and Ocean Island for them "to clear any delayed or future messages to Roviana, whence they can be forwarded here by vessels which may be coming to Tulagi" (Reports 'Tulagi Radio' temporarily out of action. WPHC M.P. No.1727/1924, Microfilm 79-263). He would also send a telegram to the High Commissioner to let him know of the latest developments. This message would be sent *en clair* (i.e. not coded) as this would "avoid the possibility of any mutilation of words which could not be repeated after the *Melusia* has left" (Reports 'Tulagi Radio' temporarily out of action. WPHC M.P. No.1727/1924, Microfilm 79-263). Clearly, a further thrust at his own operator's competence.

'Native boys' run wireless

By this stage (1924), Solomon Islander operators at Roviana were handling message traffic in Morse code and voice to shipping and to Australia and New Zealand, yet the highest authority in the BSIP was recognising the lack of great competence of his expatriate team in even receiving and transmitting messages from the Government's official station. Given the colonial state of mind in the British Empire, not a thought was given to inviting indigenous operators from Roviana to be temporarily transferred to Tulagi to help out in the crisis, although the station there, as a New Zealand newspaper pointed

out, “was run entirely by native boys who were able to send and receive messages in Morse” (“A Transformation. The Solomon Islands”, 1925, August 28, p. 7).

The depth of enmity between the Administration and Goldie’s position is probably best exemplified when, four years later, the *Tulagi Radio* engineer, A.E. Osborne was asked, at a BSIP Advisory Council meeting, a leading question on the capabilities of ‘natives’ and wireless. In an apparently pointed attempt to belittle the Roviana situation, Mr. Geoffrey Clift questioned Osborne on whether he knew of any “native operator capable of being in charge of a small wireless installation and who could make the necessary adjustments, apart from repairs” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1930, November 5). Osborne, bolstering his own expertise and expatriate status, responded that “I know of no natives at present” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1930, November 5). However, he felt that it might be possible “to get the most intelligent type and train them in the Morse code at the Tulagi Wireless Station” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1930, November 5). Osborne thought that this would not be difficult. However, he commented that “I have not yet met any native whom I consider would be intelligent enough to do adjustments or repair work” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1930, November 5).

Kidson’s tacit admission, in 1924, that the British authorities in Fiji were now effectively out of electronic touch with the headquarters of one of their colonial possessions by modern means of communication and were reliant on a mission station in remote New Georgia to conduct business, was a turning point. No longer could the authorities delay the handling of licence applications for private wireless installations, nor could they deny the importance of the ‘ether’ in carrying vital messages which conveyed official, commercial and private communications between Pacific colonial possessions. Effectively, without the Roviana wireless station, the Protectorate had fallen off the edge of the world. Life had reverted to the pre-war era.

However, old colonial attitudes towards indigenous populations, not to mention the racial divide between master and servant, died hard, Goldie’s bitter correspondence to the Government authorities in Tulagi some 14 years later (Wireless Students from the BSIP-Training of, WPHC 9/11/F.5/3/1 Vol I), being a reminder of how things really worked in the empire during that period. His outburst and use of profane language had come about because of the attitude amongst some at *Tulagi Radio*, specifically “the refusal of certain

European radio operators to handle messages from native operators because the native was not so quick or so apt as the trained European operator" (Luxton, 1955, p. 113).

AWA Ltd. seeks to dominate

At the same time as the official *Tulagi Radio* was facing staffing difficulties, it was also having technical problems in terms of its signal output quality, partly due to the atmospheric conditions associated with tropical climates, but also because of its location sheltered by the mountainous terrain of neighbouring islands and the hills of Tulagi. Both the personnel issues and the technical matters played into the hands of AWA Ltd., which aggressively saw the Pacific as being its sole domain for all forms of wireless. Already, it dominated the on-board wireless shipping trade and had secured both Roviana and Vanikoro as its exemplars in displaying its wares in the BSIP while, in Australia, Commonwealth coastal radio stations had been transferred in 1922 to AWA Ltd. control (Commonwealth Commercial Radio stations transferred. WPHC M.P. No.1469/1922, Microfilm 79-239).

The broader strategic issue now at play was the control and operation of wireless in the British dominated territories of the Pacific. In 1922, AWA Ltd.'s Managing Director, Mr. E.T. Fisk, was laying the groundwork for his company by lobbying the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Right Hon. L.S. Amery.[91] He impressed upon Amery that AWA should simply take control of all wireless stations in the British Pacific, update them with new equipment and link them to Australia through a major base station in Fiji. Fisk contended that the system then pertaining, of a few stations in various islands with operations controlled from England, could not provide the necessary infrastructure for a solid future for radio in the region ("Pacific Nerve Centre", 1929, p. 31). By 1926, the Legislative Council in Fiji had agreed to AWA Ltd. taking over wireless operations there, with other colonial possessions to follow. (Recommends remission of fees paid in respect of Roviana wireless. WPHC M.P. No.2119/1926).

Given his links with AWA Ltd., the Rev. Goldie was part of a motion put to a BSIP Advisory Council meeting in December, 1924 which recommended that AWA Ltd. take-over *Tulagi Radio* in an effort to have it operate more effectively and successfully than the current

[91] Leopold Charles Amery (b.1873-d.1955). First Lord of the Admiralty and later Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Administration efforts. He also proposed that any agreement be conditional on AWA installing “telephonic communication” (Installation of wireless telephonic sets. WPHC 281/1925, Microfilm 79-270) between Tulagi and the six Sub-Districts of the BSIP. The idea was unanimously agreed to by the Advisory Council and also had the backing of the Resident Commissioner, who contacted the High Commissioner with the view that as well as controlling *Tulagi Radio*, he recommended that AWA Ltd. be asked to “establish wireless plants in other parts of the group” (Proposed taking over by the AWA Ltd. of Tulagi wireless station. WPHC M.P. No.88/1924, Microfilm 79-256). He concluded that this would be advantageous as the Administration could not, for financial reasons, undertake such a process itself.

The *Tulagi Radio* Engineer, A.E. Osborne, had already been in contact with AWA Ltd. in Sydney which, not surprisingly, had recommended that the Protectorate purchase “our type YC3 set which is of the most modern design” (Proposed taking over by the AWA Ltd. of Tulagi wireless station. WPHC M.P. No.88/1924, Microfilm 79-256). The equipment included a ½ kilowatt transmitter and, with a range of 200 miles, “is compactly arranged in a teak case with a 4 valve receiving unit” (Proposed taking over by the AWA Ltd. of Tulagi wireless station. WPHC M.P. No.88/1924, Microfilm 79-256). The cost of the set, £775, was a cause of discussion in the Advisory Council. But who should operate the sets? Council member, Donald Mackinnon, said that the Administration “could not expect District Officers to attend to a sending set” (Proposed taking over by the AWA Ltd. of Tulagi wireless station. WPHC M.P. No.88/1924, Microfilm 79-256). Mr. Campbell noted that, instead, “a receiving set could be installed at each station for listening-in” (Proposed taking over by the AWA Ltd. of Tulagi wireless station. WPHC M.P. No.88/1924, Microfilm 79-256). AWA Ltd. had already quoted to Osborne that they recommended their Radiola2 receiver, priced at £34 per set, for this ‘listening-in’ purpose because this model was “remarkable for its simplicity of operation and should be ideal for [use by] persons who are inexperienced in wireless matters” (Proposed taking over by the AWA Ltd. of Tulagi wireless station. WPHC M.P. No.88/1924, Microfilm 79-256).

As the wheels of BSIP bureaucracy ground slowly onwards, the Wireless Officer (and AWA Ltd. representative) on board the SS *Melusia*, Robert Jordan, weighed into the discussion in the latter part of 1925 by suggesting that installing telephony equipment would be a boon for the Protectorate. He contended that if *Tulagi Radio* installed a telephonic transmitter, wireless receivers would be purchased by individuals and

companies for use at plantations and Government stations so listeners could “receive shipping intelligence, market prices as well as commercial and private messages, news bulletins etc.” (Installation of Wireless telephone sets at Tulagi and six outstations. WPHC M.P. No.281/1925, Microfilm 79-270), which would do much to overcome issues of isolation. Essentially, Jordan was recommending the development of a quasi-broadcasting service in the BSIP.

A ‘wholesome fright’

In return for Goldie’s co-operation in transmitting messages free of charge to Tulagi since the Roviana station was established in 1923, the BSIP Resident Commissioner felt (in 1925) that the annual £2 ‘royalty’ (licence fee) which Goldie had paid should be returned to him for services rendered (Recommends the remission of the fee of £2 paid by Rev. Goldie. WPHC M.P. No.55/1924, Microfilm 79-256). However, this gesture was quickly dismissed by Captain Kane’s superiors in Fiji who told him that, whatever his good intentions, the licence that had been issued to Goldie “implies that the licensee will transmit Government messages free of charge” (Recommends the remission of the fee of £2 paid by Rev. Goldie. WPHC M.P. No.55/1924, Microfilm 79-256) and that was that. No refunds were possible.

The hard-line attitude of the WPHC was further evidenced when Goldie’s operating licence was inadvertently not renewed by him on time on the 31st July, 1925. The Office of the High Commissioner in Fiji pounced on the indiscretion with glee, at last being able to get a bureaucratic advantage on its old nemesis in Roviana. If the wireless set had been used without a licence, a £100 fine was in the offing. However, this bureaucratic victory was tempered by a sudden realization by the BSIP authorities that “if the Tulagi station receives from, or sends messages to, Roviana, the Administration would appear to be an accessory to the breaking of the law” (Renewal of Rev. J.F. Goldie’s wireless license. WPHC M.P. No.2706/1924, Microfilm 79-266).

To ensure that matters did not become difficult, from a red-tape point of view, the Acting Secretary of the WPHC, Mr. H. Vaskess, buried the whole matter and informed Tulagi that he could “see nothing to prevent the reverend gentleman from having his licence renewed” (Renewal of Rev. J.F. Goldie’s wireless license. WPHC M.P. No.2706/1924, Microfilm 79-266). He attached a renewal document and, with a sense of British public school ‘dark humour’ rarely shown in official BSIP documentation, Vaskess told the Resident

Commissioner that when he (Kane) approached Goldie with this information, “I think a wholesome fright might be given to advantage” (Renewal of Rev. J.F. Goldie’s wireless license. WPHC M.P. No.2706/1924, Microfilm 79-266).

Licensing issues

With licences proliferating throughout the WPHC’s jurisdiction, the authorities in Fiji realised that keeping track of expiry dates and renewal processes was becoming an administrative nightmare. Using the Goldie example as a model, the High Commissioner, Sir Eyre Hutson, made a policy decision in 1926 that “to obviate the possibility of the renewal of licences being overlooked” (Renewal of Rev. J.F. Goldie’s wireless license. WPHC M.P. No.2706/1924, Microfilm 79-266), all future licences should be given for one calendar year and would fall due on the 31st December.

Never one to bow to Government, Goldie again went on the attack in 1926 when he sent a cheque to the Resident Commissioner covering the licence fee (£2) for the Roviana wireless station and for the ‘listening-in’ set (£1) installed on the vessel *Tandanya*. He claimed that the Administration had made a ‘promise’ that such fees would be waived given the work undertaken by Roviana in handling Government message traffic. He pointed out that the Roviana wireless “is a source of very considerable revenue to the Protectorate Government” (Recommends remission of fees paid in respect of Roviana wireless. WPHC M.P. No.2119/1926). and that it was operated “at very great expense by our Mission without fee or reward of any kind” (Recommends remission of fees paid in respect of Roviana wireless. WPHC M.P. No.2119/1926).

Goldie’s letter set off another flurry of correspondence within the Administration. While the Resident Commissioner, Captain Kane, thought it an eminently reasonable request and was one he supported, the High Commission office in Fiji had other ideas and demanded to know who had made the ‘promise’. Kane noted to them that he had spoken with Goldie at the Advisory Council and said he was sympathetic to the remission of the licence fees, but that no ‘promise’ had been made. In subsequent letters, the High Commissioner’s Office continued its uncompromising and hardline approach, although the bureaucrats slightly relented and indicated that personal wireless messages passed through the

Roviana station might attract a charge of 3d.[92] a word, which Goldie could keep to help his Mission cover expenses.

In a game of consummate brinkmanship, the Rev. Goldie simply recommended to his Board of Missions in Auckland that, instead, the Roviana wireless station be closed down. "As far as *Tulagi Radio* is aware", wrote the Resident Commissioner in February, 1927, "the [Roviana] station has not been operating since last October" (Recommends remission of fees paid in respect of Roviana wireless. WPHC M.P. No.2119/1926). Recognizing the importance of the Mission wireless to the work of the BSIP Administration, the High Commissioner in Fiji backed-down and, in March 1927, reluctantly wrote that, if Goldie re-opened the station, the WPHC would allow him to charge 6d.[93] a word for private messages. The compromise was a 'win-win' for both sides of the argument, especially a domineering personality like Goldie. He quickly then paid licence monies owing and even purchased a new licence so his wireless station could re-commence operations from July, 1927.

Vanikoro takes to the airwaves

The first entity to follow the Methodist Mission's successful wireless transmitting licence application was San Cristoval Estates Ltd., a major commercial timber operation based at Vanikoro Island (also called Vanikolo) in the Santa Cruz group at the far eastern reaches of the BSIP (Application by the San Cristoval Estates. WPHC M.P. No.2235/1924, Microfilm 79-265). Vanikoro was a rich source of kauri timber and the company (later to be renamed the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Co.) continued working the forests from the 1920s to the 1960s (Bennett, 1987; Tedder, 2008).

Using the same AWA Ltd. equipment as that installed at Roviana, a ½ kilowatt, valve Marconi amplifier designed for Continuous Wave (CW) (Morse code) and speech, San Cristoval Estates Ltd. received its licence very quickly, the document signed by the Acting High Commissioner of the WPHC, Mr. Thomas E. Fell, on the 24th September, 1924 (Application by the San Cristoval Estates. WPHC M.P. No.2235/1924, Microfilm 79-265). In line with the conditions of the Roviana licence, the Vanikoro station was only allowed to communicate with Tulagi and pass all message traffic through that station. Its wireless

[92] Three pence.
[93] Six pence (half a shilling).

apparatus gave it a signal reach of 600 miles by night and 300 miles by day, quite enough to combat the notoriously difficult reception conditions pertaining in this most remote of all parts of the Solomon Islands chain. The steamer carrying the wireless equipment departed Australia on the 1st October, 1924, the station being installed later that month (Application by the San Cristoval Estates. WPHC M.P. No.2235/1924, Microfilm 79-265). During World War II, upgraded wireless facilities (including a new *Teleradio* set) at Vanikoro enabled the station, operated by Mrs. Ruby Boye,[94] wife of the manager of the company, to become a vital part of the Allied coastwatching chain. (See Chapter X.)

The next transmission licence request came from Gizo Solomons Plantations Pty. Ltd. which sought to establish a wireless telegraphy station at its plantation at Kenelo on Rendova Island in the Western Solomons. The licence, costing £2 a year, was issued on 1st May, 1925, and was signed for the company by its Managing Director, Fitz Snowball. However, the licence had severe restrictions, namely that it would communicate only 40 miles by day and 20 miles by night, the idea being that the Administration wanted to control Kenelo to only sending messages to the wireless station at Roviana, which would then pass any traffic to Tulagi (Application from Messrs. Gizo Solomons Plantations Pty. Ltd. for permission to install a wireless set at their plantation at Kenelo, Rendova Island. WPHC M.P. No.751/1925, Microfilm 79-270). In light of the decision, the WPHC had to extend Goldie's Roviana licence to not only allow his station to contact Tulagi, but also to be permitted to work the new station at Kenelo (Application from Messrs. Gizo Solomons Plantations Pty. Ltd. for permission to install a wireless set at their plantation at Kenelo, Rendova Island. WPHC M.P. No.751/1925, Microfilm 79-270).

'Listening-in' becomes popular

The majority of applications for wireless appliances related not to transmitting but to 'listening-in' sets. 'Listening-in' was the new craze of the time and, in modern parlance, is simply listening to the radio. Across the globe, radio clubs were formed, amateurs experimented and people often constructed their own wireless apparatus (such as crystal

[94] Ruby Olive Boye-Jones, BEM (b.1891-d.1990). Temporary officer Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (1943-1946) (Powell, 2007). During the war when she was a coastwatcher, she was Mrs Ruby Boye. Following the war and the death of her husband, Mrs Ruby Boye re-married and was then known as Mrs Ruby Boye-Jones.Retrieved from *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/boye-jones-ruby-olive-12242

sets), with the result that regulations were soon introduced to ensure that the then anarchy of the airwaves came under some form of control.

In Australia, the first broadcasting transmission licence was issued to 2CM, Sydney in 1921 (Carty, 2011). Other stations quickly followed, such as 2FC and 2SB (later 2BL), both also in Sydney. In subsequent years, stations along the Queensland coast began to take to the airwaves, thus enabling listeners in the BSIP and elsewhere in the Pacific to 'listen-in' to music, news and entertainment. With clear medium-wave channels, signals from radio stations carried far across the waters of the Pacific and it was not unusual for listeners to tune to broadcasts from the USA (where hundreds of stations proliferated), Hawaii, where station KGU commenced in 1926 (Kneitel, 1986), Australia and New Zealand. As early as January, 1924, programmes from stations in California "in both speech and music" ("Telephone. Voice from England another advance in Wireless", 1924, p. 7) were being clearly heard on the Australian mainland. Given that the same signals could be received in the BSIP, the sense of isolation faced by expatriates living in remote parts of the Pacific was beginning to be broken.

In 1924, the Western Pacific High Commission in Fiji started to receive requests from Resident Commissioners of its various colonial entities, such as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony (Mr. Arthur Grimble based at Ocean Island) and the BSIP (Captain Richard Kane at Tulagi), asking for information on how 'listening-in' sets used by private individuals would be licensed and governed (Use of wireless Telephonic 'listening in' sets by the public. WPHC M.P. No.2099/1924, Microfilm 79-264). Already, listeners in Fiji were carrying out "local experiments in tapping concerts etc. from neighbouring countries" (Use of wireless Telephonic 'listening in' sets by the public. WPHC M.P. No.2099/1924, Microfilm 79-264), wrote the Acting Secretary of the WPHC to the Colonial Secretary. However, as was commonplace, an extensive bureaucratic discussion was initiated within the WPHC about the licence to be used and the 'royalty' (fee) to be applied.

The current licence used in Fiji at the time became the base document as it was authorised under King's Regulation No. 9 of 1912. However, it was onerous in its intent, including having the licensee draw a diagram on the licence application form showing the aerial system to be used for simple wireless reception. As this usually constituted a single piece of wire strung between two coconut palms with a down-lead into a dwelling, a range of amusingly amateurish sketches resulted. The Acting Secretary eventually felt that the

Fijian licence was “unnecessarily complex for the purpose” (Use of wireless Telephonic ‘listening in’ sets by the public. WPHC M.P. No.2099/1924, Microfilm 79-264). He suggested that, as ‘listening-in’ sets cost from about (in his view) £1, the licence should be simplified and that the format used in Great Britain would be easier and more appropriate, noting that such permits are “issued in England without any fuss in the same manner as other licenses” (Use of wireless Telephonic ‘listening in’ sets by the public. WPHC M.P. No.2099/1924, Microfilm 79-264).

Wires in coconut trees

The first applicant for a ‘listening-in’ licence in the BSIP was Mr. Frederick M. Campbell,[95] a planter based at Waimamura (near Kira Kira) on San Cristoval[96] in the eastern part of Solomon Islands (Golden, 1993). Campbell’s licence was issued on the 18th February, 1925 for a one-year period at a cost of £1 and he advised that he was using a 4 valve Marconi ‘Radiola’ receiving set with an aerial of a length of 100 feet strung at a height of “50 or 60 feet in coconut trees” (Application by Mr. F.M. Campbell for a license to use a wireless receiving station. WPHC M.P. No.740/1925, Microfilm 79-270).

Licences in 1925 then followed for Mr. Eric Monckton of Kokonai in the Shortland Islands (using a 3 valve P.I. Circuit set) (Licence granted to Mr. E.P. Monckton to use a wireless receiving station (‘listening in’ set). WPHC M.P. No.2147/1925, Microfilm 79-278) and Burns, Philp (South Sea) Co. Ltd. based at Gizo (Marconiphone V.2 receiver) (Licence granted to Messrs Burns, Philp (South Sea) Co. Ltd. Gizo. WPHC M.P. No.2330/1925, Microfilm 79-279). During 1926, ‘listening-in’ licences were approved for Major William V.J. Blake (the Accountant in the BSIP’s Treasury and Customs Department) at Tulagi (Marconiphone V.2 receiver) (Wireless license granted to Major W. Blake. WPHC M.P. No.2588/1926), Mr. William Russell on behalf of an installation on the motor vessel *Duranbah* owned by the W.R. Carpenter and Co. Ltd. (Marconiphone 5 valve set) (Wireless license granted to Mr. W. Russell of M/V ‘Duranbah’. WPHC M.P. No.2589/1926), Mr. Herbert L. Freshwater of the Wai-ai Estate, San Cristoval (Radiotron U.V. 199 set) (Wireless licence for Mr. H.L. Freshwater. WPHC M.P. No.2917/1926), Mr. Clarence E. Hart of Lavoro Plantation, Guadalcanal (Radiola Special IV A valve)

[95] Frederick Melford Campbell (b.1883-d.1953). First Superintendent of Police, 1912. Became a planter on San Cristoval and, later, briefly took up the Acting District Officer role. Was a coastwatcher during World War II. See also Moore (2013).
[96] Also known as San Cristobal. In modern times, re-named as Makira.

(Application for wireless licence from Mr. C.E. Hart of Levers Plantations. WPHC M.P. No.2947/1926), Mr. Ernest H. Pybus of the Koriovuku-Ranonga Estate, or on-board the vessel *Lily* within a radius of 30 miles from Gizo (Radiola Super 6 Valves set) (Application for a wireless licence for Mr. E.H. Pybus. WPHC M.P. No.127/1927) (Application for a wireless licence for Mr. E.H. Pybus. WPHC M.P. No.127/1927), Mr. Leslie G. Handscomb of Nugu Estate, Guadalcanal (2-valve Marconi set, Long-Range model) (Request approval for issue of a licence for a wireless listening in set to Mr. L.G. Handscomb. WPHC M.P. No.1986/1927). Mr. Sydney Elder, Levers Pacific Plantations Ltd. of Gavutu (6 valve receiving set) (Licence granted to Mr. S. Elder. WPHC M.P. No.659/1926), Mr. Edward B. Bird, Lilihina Estate, Marovo Lagoon, Gizo (4 valve Radiola receiver) (An application from Mr. E. Bird. WPHC M.P. No.2106/1926), Mr. Robert McKerlie, Malasoga (5 valve receiver) (Application by Mr. R. McKerlie for wireless licence. WPHC M.P. No.2975/1926). Mr. Jules A.H. Bonnard for the vessel *Wheatsheaf* (Radiola IV B set) (Wireless licence granted to J.A.H. Bonnard. WPHC M.P. No.3694/1926), and Rev. J.F. Goldie for use on the Auxiliary Ketch *Tandanya* (Radiola Super receiver) (Licence granted to Rev. J.F. Goldie. WPHC M.P. No.2262/1926).

Mr. Frank J. Hickie of Lilihina, Gizo submitted a licence request (Issue of licence to Mr. F.J. Hickie. WPHC M.P. No.1980/1927) in 1927 on which he drew by hand a rudimentary aerial plan for his receiving station so he could listen to the radio and enjoy some news and entertainment in his remote location. The application received approval from the Resident Commissioner. However, such was the extraordinarily pedantic bureaucracy of the British Imperial system in the Pacific that, one month later, a message arrived back from the WPHC in Fiji noting that “the height and length of the aerial as shown in the sketch exceeds the limit of 100 feet prescribed in clause 4” (Issue of licence to Mr. F.J. Hickie. WPHC M.P. No.1980/1927). The licence was returned and Mr. Hickie was asked to amend his sketch. Clearly, Hickie had had enough of such senseless bureaucracy and requested that his application for a licence be cancelled. The Resident Commissioner, Mr. Kane, pointed out to his superiors in Fiji that “he [Hickie] has decided that he will not install a wireless receiving set” (Issue of licence to Mr. F.J. Hickie. WPHC M.P. No.1980/1927). One can only wonder at the pointlessness and the futility of the rules under which the BSIP, a remote colonial entity, was being governed. Little wonder that the Solomon Islands Planters’ Association was generally so vociferous in its condemnation of Tulagi’s bureaucratic structure.

Radio broadcasting mooted

There was such interest in 'listening-in' that the Eastern Solomon Islands Planters' and Settlers' Association wrote to the Resident Commissioner in 1926 asking him to establish a "radio broadcasting set at the *Tulagi Radio* station" (Letter from the Eastern Solomons Planters and Settlers Assn. WPHC M.P. No.3653/1926. Microfilm 0500). This would enable *Tulagi Radio* to be both a wireless telegraph operation for international messages and a standard broadcasting radio station presenting world news items and information on shipping movements to local listeners. The Association believed that such a service would encourage almost all BSIP settlers to purchase radio receiving sets as "the broadcasting of authoritative news of the steamer movements would alone be of great benefit to all in the Group [Protectorate]" (Letter from the Eastern Solomons Planters and Settlers Assn. WPHC M.P. No.3653/1926. Microfilm 0500).

Due to a lack of funds and the hiatus concerning AWA Ltd. and their proposed take-over of *Tulagi Radio*, the proposal was rejected by the Administration. With a lack of any local broadcasting service, by the end of 1927 many 'listening-in' licence holders had fallen by the wayside, the Resident Commissioner's official annual report of wireless licences showing only Vanikoro Timber Co., Mr. F.M. Campbell, Major W.V.J. Blake and Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd. Gavutu (Return of wireless licences for the year 1927. WPHC M.P. No.322/1927. Microfilm 0504). One wireless set was reported as having broken down and had been sent for repair to Australia, while other listeners probably continued to tune-in without licences, regardless.

Globally, control of wireless transmitting was beginning to be taken more seriously and a 'List of Radiotelegraph Stations' was established by the International Telegraph Union (later to become the UN's International Telecommunications Union, ITU) in Berne, Switzerland. The 'Berne Bureau' also assigned call-signs to stations globally, *Tulagi Radio* being allotted VQJ and Vanikoro changing from the self-styled 'V.O.' to become the official VQO. As Goldie's Roviana station was off the air at the time, it was not allotted a new call-sign (The wireless service in the BSIP. WPHC M.P. No.524/1927. Microfilm 0506). However, there was some confusion as to when the Roviana wireless station actually returned to the airwaves, the New Zealand Methodist Mission Society reporting on the 20th December, 1927 that a signal had arrived "a few days ago" ("Well done, Solomons", 1927) from Kokegolo reading "£4,500. Affectionate greetings – Goldie" ("Well done, Solomons",

1927). (The £4,500 figure related to how much the Roviana Mission had raised from copra sales and other income to fund itself.)

Tulagi Radio obsolete

The year 1927 was a traumatic one for the BSIP community when, in February, "three native constables of the Armed Constabulary and one other native" (BSIP Report for 1927, 1929) were murdered on Guadalcanal. In October, shock-waves reverberated throughout the Protectorate after Mr. W.R. Bell, District Officer on Malaita, Cadet Lillies and thirteen native employees of the Government were murdered while collecting taxes at Kwai'ambe, Sinarango, Malaita (BSIP Report for 1927, 1929). The news quickly reached the world through *Tulagi Radio* and was widely reported in newspapers internationally. Messages were also sent commercially through the wireless, including one from Burns, Philp and Co. in Tulagi, to reassure relatives in Australia that "The report regarding the natives' rising is greatly exaggerated. No cause for anxiety" ("Solomon Islands Murders", 1927).

By 1928, radio throughout the Pacific was taking rapid strides. AWA Ltd. had completed its arrangement with the British Government to take-over all operations of Fiji wireless stations (Durrant, 1987) on the 1st January, and the new equipment installed at Suva would "in conjunction with the Australian Beam Wireless Service, [allow] traffic to be exchanged between Fiji and Great Britain, the Continent of Europe and Canada" ("Pacific Radio Nerve-Centre", 1929, p. 15). Apart from radio operations in Samoa, Tonga, New Hebrides, French colonial possessions and the BSIP, AWA's domination of wireless in the Pacific was almost complete.

The subject of AWA Ltd. absorbing the operations of wireless in the BSIP had been under discussion by the Tulagi authorities for years, but had always been deferred. At the Advisory Council meeting in November, 1929 the subject was again broached, with a Council member asking whether or not the idea for having AWA Ltd. take over *Tulagi Radio* and also provide stations in various Districts had been advanced. The response from the Administration was unequivocal. The plan had been abandoned by AWA Ltd. as the company was not willing to take responsibility for any operation "which does not show a commercial profit" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5).

The Advisory Council was at a watershed. With no help on the horizon from AWA Ltd. and a requirement to upgrade its own major wireless communication facilities, a report from the

Tulagi Radio Engineer-Operator, A.E. Osborne, came as further bad news. Osborne was called to the Council meeting to provide an overview of future strategies and reported that "The present state of the Tulagi apparatus is obsolete and now worn out after 14 years' service" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5). Given that no major remedial work had been carried out on the equipment since it was installed in 1915, this probably came as no surprise. He noted that it was now one of only three stations in the Pacific which was not equipped with the latest technology for shortwave transmissions. An upgrading was urgently required.

The other key issue was that, under a new international convention, wireless equipment, such as that installed at Tulagi, had been superseded by more modern technology and had to be scrapped by the year 1935. Thus, the clock was ticking and the BSIP had only a few years to completely revamp its wireless system and to introduce new technology. Osborne said it would take just three weeks to install new shortwave equipment, if such a purchase was made, as wiring was already available in the transmitter building. However, Mr. Donald Mackinnon, representing the Government, put a dampener on Advisory Council proceedings by noting it would take at least a year to get the paperwork sorted out. "Correspondence has to pass through devious channels, and it all takes time" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5), he sniffily noted in true bureaucratic style.

Clearly, the outcome of the Advisory Council's discussion on this matter had been pre-ordained as the members moved quickly to a positive outlook and the belief that a new wireless plant must be purchased and installed rapidly. While a sum of £5,000 was swiftly allocated from the BSIP's surplus funds budget for the main transmitting equipment in Tulagi, the Council did not authorise expenditure on subsidiary sets at Government stations elsewhere in the Protectorate. Thus, the long desired plan of telephonic links between the islands was not to be. It was noted that, as Tulagi would take a year to put into operation, it was necessary to have this facility up and running before considering what type of wireless sets might be needed elsewhere in the BSIP.

Disregarding the experience of indigenous Solomon Islanders already operating the Roviana wireless station, Mr. Mackinnon felt that knowledge of their proficiency had yet to be ascertained, but that he was open to having "one or more natives attached to the Tulagi station for instruction" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5). He believed that the Protectorate could not commit to a general system of wireless stations in the outlying

areas unless “native operators will prove competent to work them” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5).

The entire issue was unanimously supported by the Advisory Council, with Council member, Major Frank Hewitt, noting that the ‘imperfections’ of the current *Tulagi Radio* equipment had caused many problems for Protectorate dwellers and that “the Government must be weary of listening to the complaints” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1929, November 5).

While concerns continued over how the BSIP Administration would pay the Marconi Company’s not inconsiderable quotation for the new equipment, a solution arrived in Tulagi in the shape of a recently appointed Assistant Wireless Officer, Robert S. Taylor.[97] Taylor’s knowledge of modern radio technologies and his expertise in constructing equipment at minimal cost was to save the day.

[97] R.S. Taylor (b.19?-d.1944). Assistant Wireless Officer. Later Chief Wireless Officer.

CHAPTER VIII:
A WIRELESS REVOLUTION
(c. 1930-1938)

> The complete isolation of 'the Islands', which early in this century was at once their greatest charm and their most serious handicap, is a thing of the past. The economic importance of this development [wireless] and its effect on the future of the Pacific, cannot be exaggerated. ("Radio Links the Pacific", 1930, p. 1)

AWA Ltd. shuns the BSIP

In a prominent, front-page story in its introductory edition, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* lauded the value of wireless under a heading 'Radio Links the Pacific' (1930, p. 1). The journal, commonly known as *PIM*, was continuously published from 1930 to the year 2000 and was to become the most influential magazine circulating in the region. Its endorsement of wireless in its first edition augured well for the medium, *PIM* trumpeting the view that "The magic of radio has revolutionised life in The Islands" ("Radio Links the Pacific", 1930, p. 1).

Across the Pacific, AWA Ltd. had consolidated its place as the company of choice for wireless communications and had taken over British-controlled stations at various locations, especially the key Fiji operations. The *Pacific Islands Monthly* saw this in a very favourable light as it viewed AWA's activities as "changing the islands from a semi-legendary region of adventure and romance into a home for prosperous, healthy and happy Europeanised communities" ("Radio Links the Pacific", 1930, p. 1). With such unbridled support from the media, little wonder that, in 1934, AWA Ltd. was able to declare a net annual profit of over £137,000 from its Australian and Pacific businesses ("AWA's Annual Report", 1934). Two years later, *PIM* continued to promote the company's virtues, this time noting that the profits of AWA Ltd. (whose "radio network and services are familiar to all dwellers in the Central and Western Pacific") ("Growth of AWA", 1936) had increased by £3,000 for the year.

In the BSIP, both the Roviana and Vanikoro stations were using AWA equipment, but were under private control, not the auspices of AWA itself. As mentioned previously, AWA Ltd. did not enter the BSIP communications market as the potential profits to be gained by operating stations there were not to the company's advantage. Despite this non-intervention, the influence of AWA Ltd. in the region flowed into the BSIP in unexpected ways. For example, in 1930, the volume of messages sent through *Tulagi Radio* for part of the year showed an increase of 587 over the previous six months. However, as AWA Ltd. controlled the key Fiji station, the cost of sending messages had reduced from 6d. to 3d.[98] a word and the BSIP Administration saw its revenue dip by £79.7s.5d (BSIP Advisory Council, 1930, October 20).

At the same time, the Malayta Company (a commercial off-shoot of the South Sea Evangelical Mission) and the SSEM itself, in its own capacity as a religious entity, had both applied earlier to the BSIP Administration for radio transmitting approval, but neither quickly activated their licence applications by establishing a tangible wireless capacity. By 1934, the Malayta Company was still formulating its plans to establish a sending and receiving station on its Yandina estate. "This idea should be a boon here" wrote an enthusiastic *Pacific Islands Monthly* correspondent, "although radio installations in the Solomons do not always function perfectly" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1930, October 20).

However, the field of missionary wireless was not left entirely to the SSEM and the Methodist Mission at Roviana, with the Catholic Church in the BSIP grasping the nettle and looking to develop a 'wireless telephone' system based at Visale on Guadalcanal ("Contact in the Solomons", 1930, p. 19). Bishop Raucaz, Vicar Apostolic of the South Solomon Islands and an engineer by previous profession, launched his plan at the Catholic Motion Picture and Radio Congress held at the International Colonial Exposition in Paris in 1931 ("Radio Communication for Missionaries: In Solomon Islands", 1931). He proposed to use hydro-electric power to drive his new technological system and had in mind a transmitter at his residence in Visale, with receivers at each of the Catholic Mission stations in the BSIP. A Catholic newspaper lauded the development and, in a classic understatement, noted that "The isolation of missionaries in the Pacific Islands is something not known on the continents" ("Radio Communication for Missionaries: In Solomon Islands", 1931, p. 25).

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[98] Six pence (half a shilling) and three pence respectively.

Taylor saves the day

Despite the fact that the equipment at the Government's principal station, *Tulagi Radio*, had been described in official correspondence as 'obsolete', no action was immediately undertaken by the Administration to address the situation. This was partly a financial matter, but also one of bureaucracy and the slow workings of the WPHC. However, the appointment of Robert (Bob) Taylor as Assistant Wireless Officer in the BSIP brought about a rapid change in fortunes.

Taylor was a popular, practical person with considerable technical expertise in the wireless field. He had been a radio operator on the SS *Matunga*, a Burns Philp vessel which was captured in 1917 by the German raider, *Wolf*, off Rabaul ("Conditions in the Solomons", 1940). It was said that a radio message from the vessel to Rabaul, indicating its arrival time and that it carried 500 tons of coal and a month's supply of liquor, was the precursor to its being attacked. The *Matunga* was boarded by the Germans, the cargo removed and the ship scuttled. The crew members, including Taylor, were interned on board the *Wolf* and taken to Germany, where they arrived in 1918. After the war, Taylor joined the BSIP Administration in 1929 and rose to be Chief Wireless Officer after the departure of A.E. Osborne in 1940. He stayed on for service during the Second World War and, sadly, after a period of leave in 1944 and while returning to the BSIP, the US Army Air Force Liberator aircraft in which he was a passenger was lost without trace in a storm (Clemens, 1998).

Shortly after his appointment as Assistant Wireless Officer, Taylor grasped the nettle in terms of the need for new transmitting equipment at Tulagi and, in the absence of his superior, A.E. Osborne, on leave, proceeded to build his own. On the 31st January, 1931 new batteries were installed at the transmission site and Taylor constructed a shortwave transmitter with a power input of 10 watts, this being less than 1/500th the necessary electricity needed to run the old Marconi system. After several experiments and trials, he perfected the technicalities involved and, on the 10th April 1931, demonstrated how messages could be sent by shortwave, rather than the previous mediumwave radio frequencies which consumed large amounts of power and were also subject to severe atmospheric interference (BSIP Advisory Council, 1931, November 11).

The effect of Taylor's technological enterprise was not lost on the BSIP authorities, the Resident Commissioner, F.N. Ashley,[99] profusely thanking him for his 'ingenious' work in not only saving the Protectorate £5,000, but also in bringing a much more sustainable and user-friendly technology to the Protectorate. He gave as an example the fact that a message was despatched by Taylor to London via Rabaul at 3.30pm one day, with a reply received at 8.30am the following day. This transit of a mere seventeen hours was a record. Similarly, a message from the Crown Agents in London reached Tulagi in only 4 ½ hours. "This officer's service" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1931, November 11), the Resident Commissioner told the Advisory Council, "is highly commendable and redounds great credit to himself" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1931, November 11). Given that Taylor was then earning just £320 a year (*Pacific Islands Year Book* , 1932, p. 265), his saving to a cash-strapped Administration of fifteen times his own annual salary was like manna from heaven. Further, Ashley noted that "his transmitter has simplified and expedited transmission as there is very little atmospheric interference on shortwave" (*Pacific Islands Year Book* , 1932, p. 265).

Although Taylor had resolved the issue of general telegraphic communication, wireless links to shipping were still conducted through the old Marconi mediumwave system. Taylor and Osborne set to the task of also sorting out this problem, described by the Resident Commissioner as being a matter beset with considerable difficulties. The two engineers modelled many prototypes and "after much experimenting and the solving of many problems" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1932, November 1), on the 1st May, 1932 they inaugurated the new transmitter. It had a range of 850 to 1,000 miles on a frequency of 600 metres[100] and a power consumption of only 20 watts, as against the 5,000 watts used by the old transmitter. A Government report, in congratulating the pair, noted that, apart from a few "negligible" parts (costing £20), "the whole of the apparatus used in the construction of the set was made locally" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1932, November 1).

At the same time, the wooden extension of the second tall *Tulagi Radio* steel mast had perished, like the first, and needed replacement. A fortuitous visit to Tulagi by another naval ship, the HMS *Laburnum*, in July, 1931 afforded an opportunity for the Resident

[99] Francis Noel Ashley (b. 1884-d.1976), BSIP Resident Commissioner 1929-1939. See also Moore (2013).

[100] For 3 minutes in every half-hour, all stations operating on 600 metres were required to cease transmission and listen for any emergency calls. (NZ Shortwave Communications, 1939.)

Commissioner to request that a sailor climb the 253 feet to cut away and lower the decaying wooden part (BSIP Advisory Council, 1932, November 1).

Pioneering achievements

By 1931, general living and social conditions in the BSIP had improved considerably, with a census having formally guesstimated the overall population of the Protectorate as "478 Europeans, 89,568 Native Melanesians, 3,847 Native Polynesians, 164 Chinese, 8 Japanese and 1 Malay" (BSIP, 1932). Tulagi now boasted a telephone system which connected several Government offices, businesses and private houses, while the number of indigenous Solomon Islanders in skilled work (as part of a team of mechanics) had also advanced.

Unlike in the BSIP, the rapid expansion of wireless and radio broadcasting continued elsewhere in the Pacific, with AWA Ltd. developing its own broadcasting service on shortwave frequencies from its main station in Pennant Hills, Sydney. On Sunday evenings from 7.30pm to 9.30pm, it transmitted news, information and entertainment aimed specifically at Papua, New Guinea, New Hebrides, BSIP and New Caledonia ("Broadcasts for Islands", 1931). The introduction of the transmissions gave a considerable boost to the popular hobby of 'listening-in' and also hastened the notion of the establishment of domestic radio broadcasting services. However, generally speaking, rather than a tool of information, commerce and development, radio was still seen as an antidote to a lonely life in a region which was considered to be 'less civilised' than Europe or Australasia. "It is unique that planters in the most isolated parts [of the Pacific]" ("Radio in the Islands", 1931), wrote *PIM*, "are, in less than a minute, able to transport themselves to civilization by the simple process of tuning-in" ("Radio in the Islands", 1931).

It was also a time of 'firsts' for the Pacific, with the pioneering broadcast of the Motu language being heard over the AWA Ltd. transmitter from Sydney. At the time (April, 1931), two Boy Scouts from Papua were attending a rally in Australia and sent messages of greetings in Motu to their family in Hanuabada. "Some of the older Papuans were convinced that it was nothing less than 'puri-puri', or white man's magic, and was quite inexplicable" ("Motuan on the Air", 1931), wrote one correspondent. In 1932, the Lieutenant-Governor of Papua, Sir Hubert Murray, used wireless while trekking to Kokoda, an inland station in the Owen Stanley Ranges. His message to the Australian Prime Minister in Canberra elicited a response the following day, this being the first occasion on

which a radio message had passed from an inland station in Papua to Australia ("Papuan Radio", 1932).

Empire dominates the airwaves

A major technical achievement of wireless for the BSIP, and other Pacific territories, occurred on 'Empire Day', the 24th May, 1933. That evening, Royal Empire Society branches throughout the world held celebratory dinners. The plan was for wireless links to be made and for speeches and messages to be shared across the entire network of British colonial possessions participating in the event, the technical aspects being handled by the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, AWA Ltd., the New Zealand Broadcasting Board, and Postmasters-General Departments in the UK, Canada and New Zealand. Speeches at the dinner at the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney were carried via the AWA Ltd. shortwave transmitters and, from 8.14pm to 8.21pm (local time), included a "roll call of 'outposts' of the Empire in the South Seas" ("Broadcast to Link Empire", 1933, p. 14). Stations in Suva, Port Moresby, Tulagi, Nauru, Rabaul, Tonga and Lord Howe Island all made 'live' input to the event as part of what was described as "an extraordinary demonstration of the practical, as well as sentimental, ties which unite British people in all parts of the world" ("Broadcast to Link Empire", 1933, p. 14).

The following day, newspapers extolled the success of this venture and promoted the key outcome of the event, namely that "broadcasting has definitely risen to help in maintaining Empire unity" ("Great Broadcast. Empire countries linked", 1933, p. 9). One of the highlights of the transmission, apart from the clarity of the voices heard from across the globe, was the performance of a cantata *The Call of the Southern Seas*, especially composed for the occasion by Alfred Hill[101] and which "recalled the music of South Sea people, as well as the seas themselves" ("Great Broadcast. Empire countries linked", 1933, p. 9).

The Empire Day broadcast was part of an overall thrust in 1933 to further the hegemony of Great Britain over the airwaves of not only its colonial territories, but the world in general. In the UK, the BBC replaced its ageing experimental station, G5SW, with a new and very expensive shortwave system designed specifically to target the colonies and to deliver British content and values to listeners in even the remotest of regions. Such was the

[101] Alfred Francis Hill (b.1869-d.1960), Australian composer (McCredie, 1983).

perceived importance of the Empire Broadcasting Scheme, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific made a point of actively promoting the venture to the various Pacific administrations. He not only suggested that when reception was good listeners should invite their “neighbours [to] hear transmissions from England’ (Empire Broadcasting Scheme. Circular despatch from the Secretary of State, January 7, 1933), but that recorded programmes produced by the BBC would become available for local transmission in colonial possessions where some form of radio broadcasting existed.

Rumblings of war

However, the 1930s were also years in which concerns began to be heard about the possibility of another world war. In 1935, reports came into Tulagi that a sea-plane, origin unknown, had been sighted in the western part of the BSIP. The Advisory Council discussed the issue and believed that wireless stations located in the Districts of the Protectorate “might prove to be of the highest consequence” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1935, May 7) in passing information quickly on such important matters of territorial integrity. The major impediments to the establishment of such stations were financial cost and the availability of operators to both use Morse code and to make repairs to equipment.

A solution was in the offing through the manufacture by AWA Ltd. of a new type of experimental wireless transmitter/receiver, specifically designed for use by non-technical operators in remote locations in Australia and the Pacific islands. This set, which could be used for sending both telegraphy (Morse) or telephony (voice) messages, came equipped with cumbersome batteries, but could also rely on pedal power “supplied by a native, who sits on a thing like a bicycle frame, and pedals lustily” (“Use of Morse and Telephone Radio Sets in N.G.”, 1934). This set, to develop into the ubiquitous AWA *Teleradio* was one of the most important and influential developments in communication in the isolated islands of the South-West Pacific. Sets were quickly installed by the Australian authorities throughout Papua and New Guinea, with both Government and private entities purchasing the equipment.

One of the BSIP Advisory Council members, Donald Mackinnon, was a particular supporter of the need for wireless sets when he noted at the May, 1935 meeting that “the advantages are clear and indisputable” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1935, May 7). He especially pointed out the commercial opportunities which would be afforded by such

communication sets and that “the information quickly ascertainable from markets, movements of shipping and many other matters important in business matters would be of inestimable value” (BSIP, 1935, May 7). However, the issue of financing the purchase and operation of the sets was the major sticking point. The BSIP budget was stretched to the limit during the post-global depression years and, while the Advisory Council spirit was willing, the Treasury situation was weak.

Burns Philp & Co. Ltd. Branch Manager (Makambo) and Advisory Council member, J.C.M. Scott, was prescient in his comments to the meeting when he explained that he considered “that in a case of a war in which our country might become involved, the fact that we had wireless communication within the Protectorate would be of untold value” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1935, May 7). He also indicated that one of his newly appointed staff members, a Mr. B. Chapman, was a radio amateur and had already given his thoughts on how Protectorate-wide wireless coverage could best be achieved. The meeting requested that Chapman experiment by sending messages between Guadalcanal and Tulagi to ascertain whether newly imported equipment would be up to the task.

New technology introduced

The technology to be operated was a new two-volt wireless set (pedal-powered) which was easy-to-use as it sent messages by voice (telephony), rather than Morse key. The set was constructed by AWA Ltd. and had been proved to be efficient when used by the Australian Inland Mission (and other users) to communicate across vast distances of the ‘outback’. According to BSIP Advisory Council member, the Right Reverend Bishop Baddeley, who had explored the use of such systems to link his remote Melanesian Mission on Santa Cruz (in the Eastern Outer islands), “the cost of a small instrument would be about £60 to £65 and such an instrument could be worked by a man without technical knowledge” (BSIP Advisory Council, 1935, May 7).

The trials suggested by the Advisory Council were not universally welcomed, the Engineer-Operator at *Tulagi Radio*, A.E. Osborne, clearly feeling the heat in terms of competition in expertise from amateurs. This was, no doubt, something of a professional affront. Also, it seemed that his previous advice to the Advisory Council, specifically about the need to have trained operators to handle the whole scheme, was being overlooked.

At the May, 1935 meeting, the Secretary to Government informed the Advisory Council members that he personally knew nothing about wireless telegraphy or wireless telephony, but that the "Wireless Department had always stressed the fact that operators of wireless sets installed in the Protectorate must be experts in the transmission and reception of Morse" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1935, May 7). Given that the new radio sets to be tested used telephony (voice), not just Morse code (telegraphy), it was clear that a new technological era was dawning and Osborne's grip on control of the medium in the BSIP was rapidly loosening. When Advisory Council member, Donald Mackinnon, pointed out to the same meeting that "a full size set [of the new equipment] was operated successfully by a native and was in frequent communication with Rabaul (BSIP Advisory Council, 1935, May 7), Osborne's domination of wireless in the BSIP context was virtually over.

In a gentle rebuke, the Resident Commissioner, F.N. Ashley, wrote to Osborne immediately after the Advisory Council and pointedly noted that "We must recognise the fact that we must progress with the times" (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1). Ashley further insisted that "the cost of the instruments appears to have been so much reduced as to make the objection on the grounds of cost almost a needless obstruction" (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1). Further reinforcing his intentions, the Resident Commissioner instructed Osborne to estimate equipment costs for wireless sets at Aola, Auki, Gizo and Tulagi, along with running expenses and potential revenue. In case Osborne still did not get the message, Ashley told him that "in other words, I wish you to put up a workable scheme for transmission to the High Commissioner" (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1). Two weeks later, Osborne did.

Amateur radio takes hold

In the meantime, on the 26th March, 1935, Mr. B.A. Chapman of BP and Co. Ltd. in Makambo applied for an amateur radio licence, thus enabling him to become what some people refer to as a 'ham radio'[102] enthusiast. The application made it clear that operation of the transmitter would "only be used as a hobby and that no commercial messages would be handled" (Wireless licenses, experimental, in British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Issue of. WPHC 9/II, F.5/32/2). Chapman displayed his credentials by

[102] 'Ham radio' was a colloquial term devised during the period of early radio experimentation when amateurs were seen as 'ham fisted' and not particularly professional. The term 'radio amateur' is now more commonly used.

explaining that he had operated such a station in Australia for at least four years and also held the Certificate of Proficiency of the Australian Postmaster-General's Department (Wireless licenses, experimental, in British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Issue of. WPHC 9/II, F.5/32/2).

In a clear lapse of the usually efficient colonial administration filing system, the Resident Commissioner sent Chapman's application to the High Commissioner in Tulagi, mistakenly noting that "this is the first application of its kind which has been received in the Protectorate" (Wireless licenses, experimental, in British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Issue of. WPHC 9/II, F.5/32/2). It seems that the file on Cyril Buchanan's pioneering licence approval for an experimental wireless telegraphic station at Gavutu (in 1914) had been overlooked and Chapman was to incorrectly receive the credit for being 'first'.

Chapman's licence was approved on the 27th September, 1935 and attracted a two guinea (£2.2s.0d.)[103] fee per annum. His licence ran to seven pages of detailed writing, concluding with the specific information that the name of the station would be 'Makambo Experimental', it would have the call sign VR4-BA[104] and could operate from Makambo Island using frequencies in the 10, 20, 40, 80m and 160 metre bands. Given that so few radio amateurs existed in the BSIP, their call-signs were either the initials of their name (as in the case of Chapman), or the initials of their given name and surname. The 'system of emission' for Chapman was both CW (Morse code) and telephony. The equipment had a power of 8 watts to 10 watts and the station was authorised to transmit at any time of the day or night.

The next person to apply for a licence was Mr. A.W. Dickes, who worked in Tulagi as First Clerk and Boarding Officer with the BSIP Administration. His licence was issued two years later (31st March, 1937) and, although he was the second person (after Chapman) to apply, his licence (VR4-AD) was issued as No. 5. Dickes was able to gain permission in 1938 to upgrade the power of his transmitter from the original 10 watts to a not inconsiderable 50 watts.

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[103] One guinea was £1.1s.0d, two guineas being £2.2s.0d and so on.

[104] VR4 was the international prefix assigned to the BSIP under international convention. New Hebrides (British) was YJ and New Hebrides (French) was FU8. New Guinea was VK9, Australia was VK and New Zealand ZL (*Radio*, January, 1930, p. 136).

Throughout the world, other radio amateurs were keen to contact their fellow enthusiasts in the BSIP. Wireless communication with amateurs in remote parts of the globe is the essence of the hobby and, in November, 1937, Chapman was a target for 'hams' from the USA and beyond. "At Tulagi is VR4-BA" (DX, 1937, p. 64), wrote a Los Angeles based radio magazine. "He is a former VK [call-sign for Australian amateurs] and is using 10 watts" (DX, 1937, p. 64.) The article also mentioned Dickes (VR4-AD) but incorrectly gave his name as A.W. Rickes [sic], with an address at The Treasury, Tulagi, B.S.I.

"There is another station in B.S.I. on a different island at Diamond Narrows", wrote *DX* magazine (1937, p. 64). "He is VR4-HR, H.R. Robertson, Gizo, B.S.I. and manages a cocoanut [sic] plantation for the people who make Lux soap" (*DX,* 1937, p. 64). The writer of the article also mentioned Santa Cruz where "At Vanikoro is VR4-CW who will probably be leaving the island soon for other parts" (*DX*, 1937, p. 64). The international links between BSIP amateurs and their colleagues abroad indicated the geographical range of even the smallest of radio transmitters, some rated at only 10 watts.

Meanwhile, a non-amateur licence was provided (24th March, 1936) by the BSIP authorities to the Solomon Island Gold Development Ltd. [sic] at Berande on Guadalcanal so it could use telephonic equipment to send messages to *Tulagi Radio* (BSIP Advisory Council, 1936, June 12).

An 'analogue divide'[105] develops

Given the rapid uptake of amateur radio licences, the BSIP was transforming from a quiet backwater with no international communication tools into becoming a 'wireless literate' society where people in even the most distant locations were recognising the value of the technology in overcoming isolation. There is no doubt that, although the radio amateurs were not licensed to transmit messages of a commercial or official nature, their regular contact with each other would have provided details of weather, shipping, local news and personal information. Effectively, this would have been the 'social media' of its age and other amateurs, tuned to the same radio frequencies, would have shared the new knowledge and spread messages to many others. It was also highly unlikely that the official *Tulagi Radio* station, already overloaded and understaffed, would have shown any active interest in monitoring signals or taking action against amateurs using the airwaves

[105] Expression (origin unknown). See also explanation by Hadlow (2015).

for other than the intended purposes. During the first half of 1936, for example, the small staffing complement at *Tulagi Radio* was extraordinarily busy in handling 905 incoming and 1,314 out-going messages, the revenue gained being £159.14s.0d. (BSIP Advisory Council, 1936, October 20).

If the authorities at Tulagi had intended to ensure that the provisions of the wireless licences given to religious, commercial and amateur radio transmitters were honoured (i.e. only to be used for sending messages to Tulagi, or for experimental purposes), control of the flow of information had been lost early in the piece. At Choiseul in June, 1924, Frank Chivers, the Roviana engineer, and the Rev. John Metcalfe used the wireless on-board the Mission's vessel to spend an hour 'listening-in'. Although reception from Rabaul was not very clear, "we obtained a good bit of press news" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 7, June, 1924). Some years later (1929), Metcalfe was staying with Captain Middenway,[106] District Officer at Gizo, and, using the official wireless set, "we were able to hear Sydney and Melbourne quite well" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 5, 1929). The paucity of information from Tulagi was such that, in 1937, Metcalfe, while visiting Noro (New Georgia) even had to ask his friend, H.R. Robertson, to contact another amateur at Tulagi to obtain a weather report (Descriptive newsletters, No. 85, 1937). Clearly, the Government was losing the information dissemination race.

Just as in the 21st century, where the introduction of the Internet and other digital technologies has overwhelmed the capacity of Governments to rapidly develop legislation to control and provide order, so the British authorities of the 20th century Pacific were neither able to quickly grasp and appreciate the value-add of wireless, in all its forms, nor to effectively manage, control or stifle the new technologies. However, whereas in the modern Internet age commentators talk of the 'digital divide' or 'knowledge divide' separating those who have ICT connectivity and those in developing societies who do not (the 'haves and have-nots'), so wireless, in 1930s BSIP, was very much a medium of the expatriate population, 'the haves'.

An 'analogue divide' thus developed between those who either owned or could access wireless and those (mostly the indigenous dwellers) who had no opportunity to enjoy the benefits of radio, despite some 'natives' operating the wireless facilities at Roviana.

[106] Arthur Middenway, District Officer, Gizo, 1923-25 and 1928-36. 9-32. (Golden, 1993, p. 412). See also Bennett (1987, p. 398).

Without money to either buy a wireless transmitter, or to have access to electricity (or rechargeable batteries), or to understand the English language, most Solomon Islanders could never expect to be part of this new technological age. The benefits of wireless specifically directed towards them did not come about until World War II. (See Chapter X.)

Osborne's plan

In response to the Resident Commissioner's edict that he should establish some form of strategy to bring Government wireless stations to the remote regions of the BSIP, the Engineer-Operator at Tulagi, A.E. Osborne, brought forth a proposal in June, 1935 which continued the obfuscation concerning the entire process. Noting that finance seemed no longer an issue, Osborne's paper contended that if the Government established small stations in Auki, Aola, Gizo and Tulagi, it was inevitable that private operators would also seek to develop their own stations. Rather than seeing this as a benefit to the overall commercial and social development of the BSIP, Osborne's concern centred around the fact that his own staff at *Tulagi Radio* would be overwhelmed in handling all the increased radio traffic.

Osborne also had a low regard for the capability of BSIP District Officers to adequately use any form of wireless equipment, despite the fact that it was especially designed for simplicity. "We again reiterate", he thundered, "that the wireless transmitter capable of being operated indefinitely in this climate without regular expert supervision, has not, and in all probability never will be, manufactured, all arguments to the contrary notwithstanding" (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1).

His solution to the BSIP issue was, of course, to recommend the hiring of an additional wireless operator at *Tulagi Radio* to enable him (and his assistant, Robert 'Bob' Taylor) to spend the necessary time in District Offices servicing equipment. An extra pair of hands would also ensure the adequate handling of increased message traffic. Osborne estimated that each District wireless installation would cost £160, with annual upkeep being around £15. In return, at 3d.[107] a word charged for messages, income probably wouldn't be more than £5 a year (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1).

[107] Three pence.

By the time of the November, 1935 session of the Advisory Council, Assistant Wireless Operator, Bob Taylor, had constructed several technical units for the proposed inter-island wireless communication system. In congratulating Taylor on his ingenuity, the Resident Commissioner reported that the units “will adapt the main installation [*Tulagi Radio*] for the transmission of telephonic speech and also, if necessary, for broadcasting” (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1). Taylor had used spare parts and surplus bits and pieces to build the new equipment, the only cost to the Administration being the purchase of a microphone. The expected geographical range of the ‘radiophone transmitter’ was 500 miles, thus allowing the authorities “to reach any point in the Protectorate by wireless telephony” (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1).

Unfortunately, in this moment of triumph, Mr. Osborne became very unwell and undertook sick leave. It was left to Taylor to share more of the load in carrying the task into the future. He took over the role of Acting Engineer-in-Charge and, in January of the following year (1936), was keen to pass on his views on how matters should develop.

First wireless transmitter in Auki

Taylor noted that fifteen AWA Ltd. ‘pedal-driven’ sets had been installed in neighbouring Papua and in New Guinea. However, he cautioned that without a mechanical engine, such equipment would not run sustainably at the necessary electricity generation load to ensure a signal would be constant. “Pedalling is extremely hard work, even for a powerful man” (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1), he pointed out, so the choice for the BSIP came down to equipment which could be more expensive, but would be more reliable.

The AWA wireless set was his preferred option, but he disparagingly wrote that he “did not consider it comparable with the English-made article, but under reasonable conditions it is quite capable of giving satisfactory service” (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1). Given that the AWA 3BZ *Teleradio* (successor of the AWA 3A and 3B) was, in a few years, to become the backbone of the wartime coastwatching service and a vital tool in the winning of World War II in the Pacific, his criticism might well be seen as being a little uncharitable. This was especially so as similar British equipment did not seem to exist, Taylor noting to the Resident Commissioner that he had no recent information about English-made apparatus and that the Crown Agents in London might

look to “discovering whether there is available in England installations suitable for our requirements” (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1).

Reluctantly, he expressed the opinion that the Australian wireless sets could be given a trial and one should be purchased and sent to Auki, thus being close to Tulagi if technical difficulties resulted and his services might be required to undertake repairs. Taylor also insisted that training would be required to ensure that District Officers had elementary instruction in the theory of wireless and the “care and manipulation of the set” (Wireless Installations and Equipment in the BSIP, WPHC 9/II. F5/22/1). Another set would be installed in the new building constructed in 1935 for *Tulagi Radio*, the old wireless station having been demolished after becoming unsafe due to the ravages of termites (Annual report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1935).

However, before the AWA sets were ordered, the BSIP Administration purchased, in January, 1937 a transmitter and receiver combination wireless set from Mr. H.E. (Harry) Maude[108] a senior colonial official who was visiting the BSIP from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony *en route* (ostensibly) to a new posting in Zanzibar. His radio set, purchased by the BSIP through the Crown Agents for £25, was a master-oscillator power amplifier using a Marconi PX4 valve and operated with both Morse and telephony on either 40 or 20 metres. It came with its own power plant (a ½ hp 4 stroke air-cooled engine). Maude had used the set in the Gilbert Islands, where he had been Lands Commissioner, and it had given splendid service. He especially pointed out that the whole set-up was, in his view, extremely portable “since it could be comfortably carried by a native, or on board a canoe” (Installation of a Wireless Station at Auki. WPHC F68/3).

In late January, 1937 the *Tulagi Radio* Engineer-Operator in Charge, A.E. Osborne, installed the apparatus at the District Station in Auki, Malaita and also constructed two masts, each of 54 feet in height, one for transmitting and the other for receiving (Installation of a Wireless Station at Auki. WPHC F68/3). However, wireless tests with the new equipment were unsuccessful. While reception from Tulagi, 45 miles away, was clear, *Tulagi Radio* could not hear a voice signal from Auki, but could receive Morse. A disappointed Osborne provided a Morse code training book to the Malaita District Officer,

[108] Harold (Harry) Evans Maude (b.1906-d. 2006). Colonial Administrator (especially the GEIC). Donated his papers to Special Collections, Adelaide University.

Eustace Sandars,[109] and concluded that no wireless service could be provided until "a more powerful telephone can be installed at Auki" (Golden, 1993, p. 413).

Sandars persisted with Morse transmission, but reported to the Secretary to Government that he had to use head-phones for receiving messages, which he found very difficult, as "my ears are inclined to give me trouble and the volume of sound and the noises are quite too much for me" (Installation of a Wireless Station at Auki. WPHC F68/3). He requested that a loud-speaker be purchased and sent to him (Installation of a Wireless Station at Auki. WPHC F68/3).

In the meantime, a bureaucratic 'blame shifting' battle was underway between the Resident Commissioner, F.N. Ashley, and Osborne as to how the Auki radio fiasco had come about. Ashley had to send the whole file upwards to the High Commissioner in Fiji and needed ammunition to cover his back for such a mess. He quoted Osborne's report about the signal from Auki, 45 miles away, being weak and plaintively asked his wireless chief "Could this not have been ascertained from a description [of the equipment] before purchase?" (Installation of a Wireless Station at Auki. WPHC F68/3). In April, Osborne put his views in writing and said that his Wireless Department had carefully looked at the specifics of the set which was purchased and believed that it had been built by an expert, so should be capable. The problem lay, he said, in faulty circuit design, causing poor power efficiency. On a positive note, he felt that the set could be returned to Tulagi from Auki and sold to "one of the Gold Companies or wireless amateurs" (Installation of a Wireless Station at Auki. WPHC F68/3) to at least get some funds returned to Treasury.

By the time of the next BSIP Advisory Council in October, 1937 Osborne had been appointed as a Council Member and had to sit through embarrassing discussions which highlighted the actions of his Department. He also had to listen as the Resident Commissioner, F.N. Ashley, told the Council that the recommendation made earlier by his subordinate, the Assistant Wireless Officer, Robert Taylor, concerning the purchase of AWA Ltd. *Teleradios*, was accepted and that two such sets had been ordered, one for Auki and the other for Tulagi. In 1938, another set was purchased and installed at Gizo (BSIP Advisory Council, 1938, April 4).

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[109] Eustace Sandars, Sub-Inspector of BSIP Police, 1928-1942 and District Officer, Malaita (Golden, 1993, p. 413).

Given that the entire subject of inter-island radio communications had been discussed for years by successive Advisory Councils, the wheels of bureaucracy were clearly working at a glacial pace and the BSIP was rapidly falling behind other colonial entities in the Pacific in the wireless field. The Rev. John Goldie thought he knew part of the reason when he wrote to a colleague and mentioned the sets being installed at all Government stations. Referring to the Administration staff in the offices away from Tulagi, he noted, in his usual sceptical style, that "No one understands them [wireless sets] and they [officials] generally resent their presence as it gives them more work and keeps them in touch (when they are working) with headquarters, which they don't like" (Goldie, March 14, 1939).

Early opportunity missed

Despite the availability of the technical equipment (built by Taylor) capable of broadcasting news, information and music to the people of the BSIP, it was not immediately activated for this purpose. Meanwhile, in neighbouring Papua, AWA Ltd. established a full broadcasting station with the call-sign 4PM, Port Moresby. It opened on the 25th October, 1935, operated on the mediumwave frequency of 1360 kilocycles[110] and, as the "first commercial broadcasting station to be erected in the Pacific" ("New Broadcasting Station Opened", 1935), was to present programmes of both local and Australian origin. "It will be a priceless blessing to those who hold the lonely outposts of these territories, the planters, miners and others, who are far removed from the centres of settlement" ("New Broadcasting Station Opened", 1935) said the Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, at the opening ceremony. Another AWA Ltd. broadcasting station (ZJV) was also being constructed in Suva, Fiji.[111]

In the BSIP, the authorities in Tulagi still had no plans to enter the field and missed the chance, grasped in Papua, to provide a broadcast information service directed not only to expatriates, but also to Solomon Islanders. Such a service would have encouraged a climate in which news could be disseminated, educational efforts developed and the beginnings of inclusiveness shared. Perhaps it was the case that a simple and unfortunate bureaucratic glitch might have delayed the whole process. In 1936, a British Government Report of a Committee on Broadcasting Services in the Colonies (Windsor-Olive, 1937), gave some potential directions for radio in the Empire. It is possible that a copy of the

[110] kc/s, now known as kHz.
[111] 4PM, Port Moresby was closed, for security reasons, in 1942 when war came to Papua.

Plymouth Report,[112] as it was known, was either lost in the filing system or never actually reached the WPHC in Fiji (see Chapter XIII), thus causing a decade-long hiatus.

The value of an aural medium, such as radio broadcasting, in reaching a non-literate, oral-based society and the way in which such an audience would perceive, understand and receive a message (Ong, 1982) might well have hastened a spirit of greater understanding and egalitarianism in the BSIP between 'master and servant'. It is fair to suggest that this view of the author could be considered naïve when seen within the Imperial context then prevailing. However, many colonial officials displayed a great deal of empathy towards their charges and had a genuine affection for the development of the 'natives' within BSIP society, so it is fair to assume that the transmission of news and information in English and, possibly, Pijin could have been influential in a pre-war setting where rapid and irrevocable social change would inevitably result from global political outcomes. Such a development would surely have been seen as not only politically proper, but also an indication of care and interest in their subjects by the British bureaucrats.

Instead, the BSIP officials continued with their bureaucratic regime of obstruction and the imposition of frustrating rules. Even Mr. Osborne, heading *Tulagi Radio*, fell afoul of his own Wireless Regulations and was twice "put on the mat" ("Absurd B.S.I. Radio regulations", 1935) by his superiors for not having a wireless receiving licence. Another citizen was pettily warned that he could not loan his licensed set to a friend to provide music for a dance. "Restrictions and taxation without service seems to be a Solomon's motto" ("Absurd B.S.I. Radio regulations", 1935) wrote a *PIM* correspondent.

Not moving towards the establishment of a broadcasting service in such a dynamic global political environment was a strategic chance gone begging. The mid-1930s were years when the dark clouds of war were looming in Europe and it was becoming clear to colonial officials in even this remotest corner of Empire that life was probably about to change inexorably and that a global catastrophe was in the offing.

In the UK, plans were already in hand (1935) to establish a Ministry of Information which would impose censorship and take control of news broadcasts and propaganda efforts during any possible future war (Potter, 2012). In the colonies, such controls already

[112] I.M. Windsor-Olive was also Earl of Plymouth.

existed under local interpretations of the King's Regulations and, in an 'information hungry' environment, where residents had already voted with their ears and were accessing news from overseas radio stations, it seemed clear that a local news and community information service, presented by Government through the wireless, could only be viewed as a positive venture.

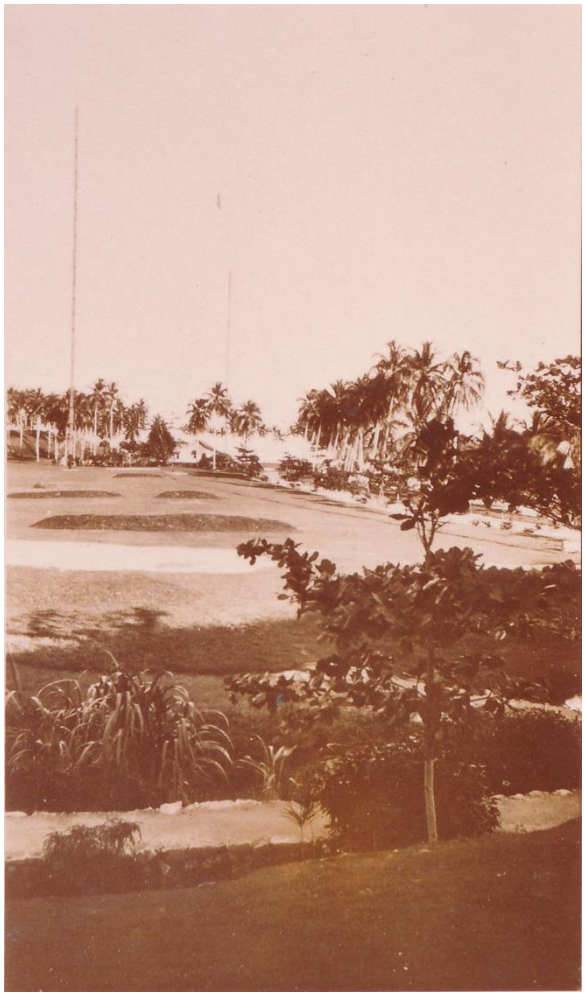

Figure 10: Tulagi Radio masts.

View over Tulagi showing Tulagi Radio masts. (c. 1935)

[Credit: D.C. (Dick) Horton]

Figure 11: Radio mast and Tulagi Radio building.

Radio mast and Tulagi Radio building (c. 1935)

[Credit: D.C. (Dick) Horton]

Figure 12: Tulagi and wireless station masts.

View of Tulagi and wireless station masts (1930)

[Credit: Prof Clive Moore collection]

Figure 13: Advertisement for the AWA 3A Teleradio.

Advertisement in 1938 for the AWA 3A Teleradio, the forerunner of the AWA 3B and 3BZ variants used by coastwatchers during World War II.

[Credit: Pacific Islands Monthly, August, 1938]

CHAPTER IX:
CALM BEFORE THE STORM
(c. 1938-1941)

> In Tulagi are situated all Government Department Headquarters and the principal wireless station in the Protectorate. The latter is much exposed on the flat south-western shore and vulnerable to gun-fire from the sea. Except for the destruction of the Wireless Station, it seems doubtful that the capture of Tulagi by an enemy would be of any great military value.
>
> Local information required for consideration of questions of defence in WPHC Territories. Secret cable, 29th March, 1939.

Concerns about Japan

Despite its remote and isolated location on the fringes of the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, the potential for the islands of the Protectorate to be drawn into a global military conflict had exercised British military minds for years. Concerns about foreign intervention into territorial waters had been troublesome locally and it was common, in the BSIP, to see pearling luggers and *beche-de-mer* (sea cucumber) trading vessels which had travelled extensive distances from many nations, especially Japan.

As early as 1923, the jingoistic Solomon Islands Planters' Association (SIPA) was invoking fears of an influx of people from Asia. In a xenophobic article headed 'A Mysterious Incident', *The Planters' Gazette* claimed that a Japanese steamer had visited the island of Ulawa (near Malaita) in January, 1923 and had anchored for five days while the occupants sought to purchase land. The *Gazette* reported that, before the steamer departed, "the visitors are alleged to have told the natives to drop their native name of Ulawa, and call their Island *Japan*" (*The Planters' Gazette*, 1923, May, p. 6).

In 1928, as the establishment of a British Solomon Islands Protectorate Defence Force (BSIPDF) was being considered in case a war should break-out, the second most important reason given by the British authorities for undertaking the defence of the islands was the prescient observation that "The Protectorate would form a convenient base for an

enemy intending to make continued attacks on Australia" (BSIPDF Scheme. WPHC M.P. 22/II, No.F.22/III/7, November, 1928). By the 1930s, other signs were becoming apparent. The main commercial trading item in the BSIP was copra and, in 1936, three years before the outbreak of conflict in Europe, the Rev. John Metcalfe in Choiseul was contemplating trouble ahead when the market for copra hit a high of £17.17s.6d. a ton. "The price of copra worries me", he wrote in his diary, "it looks too much like war" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 8, December 19, 1936).

Throughout the 1920s, wireless stations in many parts of the Pacific often had their operations disrupted due to overlapping signals from other stations being transmitted on the same frequencies. In August, 1924 the Japanese wireless station at Truk in the Marshall Islands was transmitting in code to such an extent that signals from Ocean Island to Suva were effectively jammed. The operator at Ocean Island even decided to write down half an hour of Japanese coded messages to see whether the Royal Navy's decrypting experts could make sense of it. His transcription, which included such illuminating notations as "._... .__._ A ._._.. AS __._._.. N P" (Wireless signals intercepted from Japanese stations. WPHC M.P. No.2604/1924, Microfilm 70-266), was sent to the Admiralty in London for possible interpretation. The response was disheartening for the wireless operators. "It has not been found possible to extract any meaning from the wireless signals" (Wireless signals intercepted from Japanese stations. WPHC M.P. No.2604/1924, Microfilm 70-266), came the reply.

At the Imperial Economic Conference in London in October, 1923 the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Bruce, expressed concerns about 'competitors' in the radio field in the Pacific from a military perspective. He wondered whether the conference would agree to advancing "our wireless interests in the Pacific as much as possible, because it would be very valuable from the defence standpoint in time of trouble" (Imperial Communications 1909-11, 1919-23).

The problem of wireless interference continued and, by 1939, the airwaves of the Pacific were overwhelmed with signals from high-powered Japanese radio stations. The difficulties experienced by listeners in the South Pacific area related again to Morse code transmissions emanating from either the Japanese mainland, or its Pacific territories (such as Yap), and which drowned signals from Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) transmitters carrying the *Australia Calling Pacific* service of station VRL based at

Lyndhurst, Victoria. The Australian radio authorities remonstrated with their counterparts in Japan, but the signals continued. “JR1, V, V, V, V, L, L, L, L, J10” wrote one annoyed listener, “may make sense to the Japs, but it is just a pain in the ears to us” (“Mad Morse Signals: Japanese interference with Pacific radio”, 1939).

The physical presence of foreign boats in the islands was also regularly causing concern. “The Japanese sampans are much in evidence,” the Rev. John Metcalfe, based at Choiseul, had written in 1936 during a visit to Gizo in the western part of the BSIP, and “if the Choiseul people don’t take a tumble soon, they will have an island without inhabitants to come to. They could put a 100,000 Japs down here without much trouble” (Descriptive newsletters, No. 5, September 5, 1936). He was particularly alarmed that, although the Japanese boats were caught, it seemed ‘on purpose’ as they were escorted into Gizo harbour and were then fined £10. He contended that this stopover was contrived and enabled them to have “a jolly good working knowledge of the reefs hereabouts and if there was ever a war on, Choiseul could be grabbed without any trouble” (Descriptive newsletters, No. 5, September 5, 1936).

In 1940, the South Seas Trading Company of Japan sought to send a trade mission to Papua, New Guinea, BSIP, New Hebrides, Fiji and various other islands of the Pacific. The Australian Government intervened and informed the UK Secretary of State that it would tell the Japanese that, as far as the Australian territories were concerned, such a visit was inopportune and would be “discouraged” (Secret cablegram 611, November 24, 1940). In Australia itself, already there had been years of concern about the “fretful Orient” (“Scouts on an Empty Coast”, 1938, January 12, p. 8) with newspapers reporting that religious missions in remote areas of the Northern Territory had been equipped with pedal-powered radios to report foreign intrusions and that they were part of a new “coast watch service” (“Scouts on an Empty Coast”, 1938, January 12, p. 8) operated by the Navy.

Pioneering Government news broadcasts

Perhaps due to both the increasingly concerning news emanating from Europe and the worries about Japan’s potential to create conflict within the region, by 1938 a remarkable change of heart had been evidenced in the colonial administration in the BSIP. Not only did the authorities begin to appreciate the potential for an international war which could, militarily, affect the BSIP, they decided to start a flow of public information in the

Protectorate by allowing radio broadcasting to commence. In the early part of the year, a test transmission on shortwave was carried out by the Wireless Department and questionnaires were sent to all holders of radio licences in the Protectorate asking their views about further broadcasts from Tulagi and seeking thoughts on what information might be carried by the service. Unfortunately, only 13 of the 65 licence holders responded (BSIP Advisory Council, 1938, November 7).

Despite the poor response, the first experimental broadcast of news was made over the BSIP's official wireless system on the 2nd March, 1938. This was followed by a regular weekly news broadcast, at 10.15 a.m. every Monday, of produce and copra prices, along with details of shipping movements in the BSIP and the neighbouring region (BSIP Advisory Council, 1938, November 7).

After three wasted decades due to Governmental bureaucratic obfuscation and inaction, a suggestion made by the business community in 1905 (and again officially requested by the Solomon Islands Planters' Association in 1922) for some form of news and information flow through the wireless, had finally been addressed. The BSIP had, at last, joined the Pacific region in providing a basic form of broadcasting to its inhabitants. That it had only received responses to its questionnaire from less than a quarter of the available radio licence holders might well have been due to the fact that most would have now almost given up on the Protectorate Government and had turned, instead, to Fijian, Australian, New Zealand and other neighbouring radio stations as news sources.

The BSIP broadcasts "had been received successfully as far as San Cristoval in the East and Bougainville in the West" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1938, November 7) trumpeted the Resident Commissioner, F.N. Ashley, in his report to the Advisory Council. "And I understand it [the service] is appreciated" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1938, November 7), he added.

There is no doubt that the introduction of the weekly broadcasts was almost entirely due to the decision to purchase the popular AWA radio sets. For example, the Auki radio situation was resolved on the 20th January, 1938 when Osborne, now back from sick leave, returned to Malaita, installed the new set and conducted tests which resulted in excellent quality signals being heard in exchanges between Auki and Mr. H. Robertson's location near Gizo, 250 miles away (Installation of a Wireless Station at Auki. WPHC F68/3). The

equipment had proved its mettle. Similar stations were also established by commercial companies, such as Levers Pacific Plantations Ltd. at Gavutu (and on-board its ship, the MV *Kurimarau*), with another at the Fairymead Sugar Co. (previously the Malayta Company) headquarters at Yandina (Russell Islands) ("Growing use of Teleradio sets", 1938).

The District Officer in the Shortland Islands, geographically very close to Bougainville, wanted a set too. He was extremely concerned by the growing warlike situation and felt completely exposed without any means of communicating with Tulagi, 350 miles away. Once the regular mail steamer service departed the islands, the inhabitants were without links to any other part of the Protectorate, not even to Gizo, until the next ship arrived. "I am no alarmist", he wrote of his concerns of a potential coming conflict, "but the fact that such a possibility exists is plain for all the world to see" (Wireless telephone, 1939).

Wireless 'listening-in' was also becoming a hugely valued pastime and, once war was declared, interest dramatically escalated. The Methodist Mission at Choiseul invested in a Phillips 7 valve receiver and the Rev. John Metcalfe reported generally good reception from overseas stations at night and even some signals heard at midday. "Radio sets are a mixed blessing", he opined, "but we would not like to be without ours. We are now at the hub of the universe since we hear Big Ben[113] three or four times daily" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 32, 1940).

Apart from the chimes of Big Ben, Nick (later Sir Alexander) Waddell,[114] a Scotsman, was keen to hear bagpipes when he spent New Year's Eve by himself in a lonely BSIP District Office outpost. While typing a report by the light of a kerosene lamp, he suddenly heard bagpipes playing and thought he was losing his reason. He then noticed that his old radio set, which had not been working for months, had come to life. "I'd obviously left it switched on and something had happened to make the battery work again", he recalled (Knox Mawer, 1986, p. 66). "So there were the bagpipes coming from Scotland, bringing in the New Year. After that, the poor old machine expired and died, but it had been a famous last minute" (Knox Mawer, 1986, p. 66).

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[113] The chimes of Big Ben (the clock in the Elizabeth Tower at the Houses of Parliament in London) heralded the start of BBC News bulletins.

[114] Sir Alexander (Nick) Waddell KCMG, DSC (b. 1913-d.1999). District Officer and, later, Resident Commissioner in the BSIP. Coastwatcher during WWII. Knighted when Governor of Sarawak.

Native Wireless Operators' scheme

The immediate pre-war years also brought some positive governance news through an indication from the Western Pacific High Commission in Fiji that it was awakening to the more appropriate recognition of the skills of indigenous peoples within its bailiwick. Under a ruling debated by the Legislative Council in 1937, a plan had been elaborated to establish a scheme whereby young men from the WPHC could be enrolled at a Wireless School to be established in Fiji (Wireless School, November 28, 1937).

The training course was proposed as an extensive two to three years, with twelve students in each intake. Candidates needed a good knowledge of English and had to pass a Government test to be selected. The BSIP Resident Commissioner had asked his colleagues in Suva to reserve at least four places for local students from the Protectorate, although only two were envisaged for the first course. The other places were to go to four Fijians, four ethnic Indians (from Fiji) and four Gilbert and Ellice Islanders.

In his correspondence, the Governor, Sir Harry Luke,[115] pointed out that Fijian wireless telegraphists were very competent at their trade and that, with the development of wireless across the WPHC, not to mention the burgeoning demand for wireless personnel at airports to handle aviation movements, there would be great demand for such skilled workers. The initial course subjects to be taught were "elementary electricity and magnetism, mathematics and manipulative telegraphy' (Wireless School, 1937) before moving on to receivers and transmitters. Two rooms had been put aside for the School in a new Manual Training Centre then under construction in Suva, while the WPHC students would be accommodated in a "native-style house" (Wireless School, 1937) and provided with rations and other support. The WPHC budgeted £100 sterling per annum to cover all expenses (including tuition) of each trainee.

With the first course to commence in January, 1940 the BSIP Administration sought applications from employers of Solomon Islanders to nominate candidates to train at the new Wireless School. The Methodist Mission in Roviana supplied two young men, Jacob Leti and Simione Makini. They left Tulagi, via Auckland, for Fiji in late 1939 on the MV

[115] Sir Harry Luke, KCMG. (b.1884-d.1969). Governor of Fiji 1938-42.

Southern Cross,[116] the Rev. Goldie describing them as “fine Christian lads” (Goldie, 1937), and asking his Auckland colleagues to look after them during their New Zealand stop-over as “the native crew on the vessel left to themselves often get into trouble” (Goldie, 1937). The two trainees were to be paid £1[117] each as pocket money during their stay in Auckland.

At the same time, Goldie was asked by the Resident Commissioner to recommend two further Solomon Islanders who could be sent to Tulagi for intensive, fast-track training by the *Tulagi Radio* wireless staff. During the six months of training as Wireless Operators, they would receive 10/-[118] a month and rations (Telegram No. 37, October 9, 1939). Goldie chose Esau Hiele[119] and Jobi Tamana for these roles and each travelled from Roviana to report to the Acting Chief Wireless Operator, Robert (Bob) Taylor, at 9am on the 23rd November, 1939.

The initial reports of the two courses brought mixed news, with one (Tulagi) being more successful than the other (Fiji). Within three months of arriving in Suva, the education standard of Jacob Leti and Simione Makini was said to be “insufficiently advanced to permit them to assimilate [the] course” (Telegram No. 68/15, March 18, 1940). The telegram to the BSIP bringing the news from Fiji recommended that they be transferred to the Queen Victoria School at Nasinu “where the Director of Education considers they could be raised to [the] required standard in 2 years’ time” (Telegram No. 68/15, 1940). The BSIP authorities approved accordingly.

The news about Esau Hiele at Tulagi was much more optimistic. After nine months, the Acting Chief Wireless Officer (CWO), Robert Taylor, reported on the comprehensive course of study to which Hiele had been subjected. He found that “This native proved to possess a good standard of education, although somewhat backward in his English vocabulary” (Taylor, R., 1940). Despite this failing, probably due to the fact that Hiele had been schooled mainly in his own local language, Taylor found that he showed interest in the job, displayed an eagerness to become competent and was ‘possessed of a retentive

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[116] MV *Southern Cross* owned by the Melanesian Mission.
[117] £1 was equivalent to one month’s pay for a ‘native’ working in Tulagi.
[118] 10/- was ten shillings (half a pound).
[119] Esau Hiele went on to become a coastwatcher and radio operator. After the war, he was a senior administrator in Government and, in 1964, was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM).

memory' (Taylor, R., 1940). Using the telegraphic key (Morse code) he had developed a good style and could send 15 words a minute when transmitting and understand 12 words a minute when receiving.

Hiele was now operating the new AWA equipment which had just arrived in the BSIP and Taylor was confident that he would be well qualified by the end of the training. Unfortunately, the other trainee, Jobi Tamana, was found unsuitable, "discharged" (BSIP Advisory Council, 1940, July 1) from his duties and returned to Roviana, his training incomplete. However, for Esau Hiele, his future was brighter. After 14 months at *Tulagi Radio*, he was, in January, 1941, "posted to Gizo where he will take over the operation of the radio set and also replace Daniel Pule,[120] who will be transferred to Aola" (Letter from Secretary to the Government to District Officer, Gizo, January 15, 1941). The authorities hoped that his arrival in Gizo would also enable the station there to communicate with Tulagi by Morse, rather than the less secure telephony (voice).

Coastwatching network established

On the 3rd September, 1939 the worst fears of British colonial officials in the BSIP were realised as they received the words of their Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, in faraway London declaring that Britain was now at war with Germany.

That night, Choiseul-based Rev. John Metcalfe[121] happened to be listening to the radio at Inus Plantation on Bougainville, where he was staying with a planter friend, Paul Mason,[122] who was busily repairing his broken radio in time to hear the 7pm news. Metcalfe took a bath to refresh himself after a hot day of travel and came back to the lounge to find Mason was tuning to a shortwave frequency. "To my horror, the first news we turned on was that Germany had attacked Poland and that the war was on" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 28, 1934), wrote Metcalfe. "We heard Hitler's melodramatics a number of times, the best

[120] Daniel Pule was the senior clerk in the office of District Officer, Martin Clemens, at Aola when war broke out. He played a decisive and courageous role as a member of Clemens' Solomon Islands Scouts detachment.
[121] Rev. John R. Metcalfe (b.1899-d.1970). Methodist Missionary in the BSIP 1922-1943, and 1946-1957. Became Chairman of the Methodist Mission (succeeding Rev. J. Goldie) in 1951. (Moore, 2013).
[122] Lt. P.E. Mason, DSC, RANVR, (b.1901-d.1972). Coastwatcher operating in southern Bougainville.

reception being from an American [radio] station on Treasure Island [San Francisco]" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 28, 1934).

On Vella Lavella, mission worker, Sister Merle Farland,[123] was without a radio and received the fateful news of war second-hand after a boat called in from Gizo to pass on the message. "In some ways", she contended, "I suppose it's just as well we haven't a wireless here- we are saved a lot of suspense" (Diary of Sister Merle Farland, 1939).

The potential conflict in Europe seemed just as remote from the tranquillity of Bougainville in New Guinea, as it was from Vella Lavella, Tulagi, Guadalcanal and New Georgia in the BSIP, the eventual calamity to engulf the islands then being something beyond contemplation or imagination. In 1939, Japan was still two years away from entering the war and invading the British and Australian colonial territories in the Pacific. Little could Metcalfe, Mason or Farland have ever imagined in their wildest dreams that, within three years, Mason's coastwatching prowess and the messages he sent via his AWA *Teleradio* on Bougainville would bring him the highest accolades of appreciation, not to mention a military decoration, from the US Naval Commander, Admiral 'Bull' Halsey. Halsey counted Mason as one of the two most important coastwatchers in the region and credited them with helping to save the island of Guadalcanal for the Allies which, in turn, enabled the Japanese military forces to be pushed back in the Pacific. (See Chapter X.)

Militarily, the BSIP was totally unprepared for war. Although a British Solomon Islands Protectorate Defence Force (BSIPDF) had been formed, it lacked proper equipment, personnel and training. All British colonial officials in the Protectorate were expected to join the BSIPDF and were then given officer rank. At the outbreak of war in 1939, Tulagi was protected by a small garrison of "about 100 native troops commanded by a British officer" (Gillison, 1962, p. 516), the only military equipment then available comprising three Lewis guns (World War I era machine-guns), 108 Lee-Enfield .303 calibre rifles and 40,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition (Local information required for consideration of questions of defence in WPHC Territories. Secret cable, 29th March, 1939).

[123] Sister Merle Farland, MBE (b.1906?-d.1988) was a nursing sister who remained behind in World War II when others departed Vella Lavella. She became a coastwatcher and was evacuated to safety by submarine in 1942 (Moore, 2013).

Ironically, it was to be another type of weapon, namely the power of the voice transmitted through the ether by wireless, which was, strategically, to play a more influential role in helping the Allies than the old weaponry of the BSIPDF. Once the coastwatching network was operational in a wartime situation, the messages sent through the air via the AWA 3BZ wireless sets were paramount in alerting Allied forces to the presence of Japanese raiders and in ensuring that attacks were foiled or, at least, dented.

The military officer responsible for the development of the coastwatching network in the Protectorate and, indeed, throughout all the other islands to Australia's north, was Lt. Cdr. Eric Feldt, RAN.[124] Feldt had served in the Royal Australian Navy during the First War and, upon the outbreak of World War II, was based in New Guinea where he was a patrol officer with the local Administration. As a reserve officer with the RAN, when war was declared he immediately rejoined the Navy and was instructed to report to the RAN's Director of Naval Intelligence in Melbourne. There, he was assigned to establishing an intelligence network in the islands to Australia's north (Feldt, 1946).

Feldt readies BSIP for war

Some 200 AWA *Teleradios* were in use in the Pacific and inland/northern Australia prior to the war (Durrant, 1987). The users formed a ready-made potential network of coastwatchers for Feldt and his team, most being patrol officers, Government officials, missionaries, planters, traders, exploration company workers and the employees of aviation firms, usually based in remote areas. In 1939, Feldt visited the BSIP and recruited willing private operators while distributing (on long-term loan) additional RAN supplied *Teleradios* to Government stations where Administration sets were not available (Shortlands, Kirakira and Ysabel).

The AWA *Teleradio*[125] was a remarkable piece of technical engineering, both loved and cursed by its operators. Loved because it was relatively easy to operate. Cursed because, according to Feldt, it took twelve to sixteen porters to carry it (Feldt, 1946). A reasonably rugged radio which could stand up to "heat, wet and amateur handling" (Feldt, 1946, p. 10) it could transmit voice signals up to 400 miles and, if a key was used to send Morse, the

[124] Lt. Cdr Eric Feldt (Gill, 1996).
[125] The model AWA 3B was later overtaken by the AWA 3BZ, essentially an upgraded version which had been tropicalized for more efficient use in humid climates.

range extended to 600 miles. Listening to incoming signals was easy and the set could tune to both special Naval and Government frequencies, as well as general bands.

By August, 1940 the BSIP Government had several stations (all with temporary call-signs) operating on 6675 kc/s (known as 'X' frequency): Auki (Malaita) VQJ2, Gizo (Western Solomons) VQJ3, Kirakira (San Cristoval) VQJ4, Aola (Guadalcanal) VQJ5, Tunibulli (Ysabel) VQJ6 and Faisi (Shortlands) VQJ7 (Letter from Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, September 16, 1940). In November, the District Officer in Gizo was instructed to install another set on the neighbouring island of Ranonga and was told that a "Flying boat will visit you early next week taking [the] remaining set to Choiseul Bay" (Telegram No. 68/3, 1940).

One month later, a new station at Mundi Mundi on Vella Lavella was inaugurated under the care of the local plantation manager, a Mr. Campbell.[126] The station was given a strange call-sign, VCW2. This was because the Chief Wireless Officer felt it could not have a VQJ call-sign as this was reserved for Government stations. As it was explained by the Resident Commissioner to his colleagues at the WPHC, "V represented the initial letter of Pacific call-signs, CW indicating coast-watching and 2 being added as this station is the second of its kind, Yandina being the first" (Letter from Resident Commissioner to the High Commissioner, December 13, 1940). Along with the private stations of other planters and missionaries, after Vella Lavella went on-air the network was almost complete.

The Catalina[127] flying boat which had delivered a radio to Choiseul Bay was part of a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) contingent (No. 11 and No. 20 Squadrons) based on Tanambogo (an island connected to Gavutu and close to Tulagi). The RAAF commitment comprised a communications unit and logistical support to service, refuel and re-arm the aircraft on their long-range patrols (Gillison, 1962). Officers and men of the 1st Independent Company of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were also present, the total Australian military garrison being around 50 personnel. Given the better quality wireless equipment it was operating, in comparison with the old *Tulagi Radio* facilities, the RAAF also virtually took over handling all signals traffic into and out of Tulagi (Gillison, 1962).

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[126] Not to be confused with Mr. F.M. Campbell, who operated a station on San Cristoval.
[127] The Catalina (PBY) was a twin-engined flying boat built by the Consolidated Company in the USA. It had a very long range, but slow speed, and was used extensively for reconnaissance, air-sea rescue and mine-laying. The Catalina played a major role in rescuing flyers during the battles in Solomon Islands.

Headaches for Marchant

The situation facing the new Resident Commissioner, Mr. W.S. Marchant,[128] when he reached the BSIP in late 1939, was not an easy one. He had no sooner arrived from his previous posting in Tanganyika[129] in East Africa than war was declared. Even without this enormous impediment to his work, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* had already welcomed him with a caustic commentary on the failings of the BSIP and the difficulties he would face in dealing with the WPHC in Fiji. “The Solomons Protectorate, in an administrative sense, is a poverty-stricken territory, and the Resident Commissioner, subject to Suva (with which there is no community of interest), can do very little” (“New Solomons Commissioner”, 1939) its article warned him after he had stepped ashore. Despite this less than fulsome introductory welcome, Marchant went on to prove himself as a decisive figure when war arrived on the BSIP’s doorstep, especially in harnessing his District Officers and other operators into an effective coastwatching network once the Japanese forces militarily took control of the Protectorate.

However, not all of Marchant’s men were initially skilled in the handling of wireless equipment. On Guadalcanal, the acting District Officer, D.C. (Dick) Horton, arrived back from a lengthy patrol of the hinterland to find that his colleague at the Aola office had been helpfully charging the transmitting and receiving batteries of his AWA wireless. “He had given the receiving battery no less than fifty-two separate hours of charging”, Horton wrote with pride to the Chief Wireless Officer in Tulagi, “and succeeded in raising its strength to half its proper capacity” (Wireless Receiver, November 25, 1940). Despite the battery charging, Horton was unable to reach Tulagi by wireless and contended that the batteries might be worn out, or the whole set somehow faulty. He intended to send the set to Tulagi for repair or, better still, to be supplied with a new one and, in that case, innocently asked that it ‘be capable of receiving news broadcasts from other than local stations’ (Wireless Receiver, November 25, 1940).

The blistering reply to his request could hardly have been more forceful. The CWO was apoplectic in his criticism. “We do not expect District Officers to be experts in wireless matters”, he fumed, “but we look to them to co-operate with us in following the simple

[128] William Sydney Marchant (b.1898-d.1953). BSIP Resident Commissioner, September, 1939-1943.
[129] Now known as Tanzania.

directions given them by this Department" (Letter from Secretary to the Government to District Officer, Guadalcanal, November 30, 1940). He noted that the Aola receiver had been tested and found to be in perfect condition, except that the headphones were burnt out, which explained why Horton could not hear signals from Tulagi. As for the battery, "it has been irretrievably ruined" (Letter from Secretary to the Government to District Officer, Guadalcanal, November 30, 1940), wrote the CWO and he was at a loss to understand how anyone could be "so ill-advised to charge for fifty-two hours" (Letter from Secretary to the Government to District Officer, Guadalcanal, November 30, 1940) when two hours would have been adequate.

Taylor, the CWO, also had to teach the coastwatchers discipline in terms of wireless transmissions. In December, 1941 he admonished several for sending official telegrams "of a trivial and unimportant nature" (Letter from Chief Wireless Officer to Secretary to the Government, December 10, 1941) to Tulagi. He cited, as examples, Kennedy on Ysabel asking for "scribbling pads, indelible pencils, HB pencils, telegram forms, envelopes etc.", Forster at Kirakira seeking "20 fathom halyards for hurricane lamps, brown leather polish, 5 tins Brasso", and a District Officer (Miller) asking Tulagi to "please advise 2nd prizewinner Red Cross Sweep" (Letter from Chief Wireless Officer to Secretary to the Government, December 10, 1941).

Changing of the guard

Unsurprisingly, war conditions brought the need for a change in the overall regulations guiding the development and use of wireless in the British Empire's Pacific possessions. In 1940, the BSIP rushed into law a King's Regulation No. 2 which provided for the punishment of seditious acts and seditious libel. It also sought to control publications and "the importation of publications contrary to the public interest." (BSIP King's Regulation No. 2 of 1940, March 11, 1940). It was extremely broad legislation and classified a seditious intention as something which "raised discontent or disaffection amongst His Majesty's subjects or inhabitants of the Protectorate" (BSIP King's Regulation No. 2 of 1940, March 11, 1940). Further, even "to promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different classes of the population of the Protectorate" (BSIP King's Regulation No. 2 of 1940, March 11, 1940) was classified as against the law and made the culprit liable to a two or three-year prison sentence.

Another King's Regulation (No. 16 of 1940) related to wireless telegraphy and, essentially, brought back into force the World War I restrictions on the use of the medium. It forbade anyone to establish, own or operate any form of transmitter or receiver without the approval of the authorities, the only exceptions being members of His Majesty's Forces on operational duties, or ships at sea when outside territorial waters (BSIP King's Regulation No. 16 of 1940). In eleven pages of fine print, the new rules essentially shut-down any non-official form of wireless across the British-controlled Pacific. This brought about a huge fall in revenue for the BSIP's Wireless Department, due to the closure of all private stations in the Protectorate and the ending of commercial traffic between Tulagi and ships at sea. Government signals traffic increased, but as other telegrams were mostly of a newly introduced cheaper class for wartime austerity, overall income fell dramatically (by £146 in a year) (BSIP Advisory Council, July 1, 1940; June 25, 1941).

Not only were the laws changing, but senior personnel at *Tulagi Radio* were also on the way out. After 25 years of service in the BSIP, the Officer-in-Charge, A. E. Osborne, retired (BSIP Advisory Council, July 1, 1940; June 25, 1941). He was lauded by the *Pacific Islands Monthly* as being "highly esteemed" ("Conditions in the Solomons", 1940), the magazine announcing that "Ossie's retirement is due to ill health reasons, the medical authorities believing that a cooler clime is necessary for permanent recuperation" ("Conditions in the Solomons", 1940, p. 18).

Robert Taylor took over the role of CWO, but he was also due for leave in late 1941. A temporary assistant wireless officer, Mr. K. Collins of AWA Ltd. in Australia, was in place at *Tulagi Radio* by mid-1940 and, by the time Taylor eventually departed on leave, another AWA Ltd. employee, Mr. Hooper, was on hand to take-over the senior role. After Collins completed his one-year contract and left in 1941, a further AWA operator, Mr. R. Mills, was temporarily assigned to his job (BSIP Advisory Council, 1940, July 1; 1941, June 25). Once Robert Taylor again left the Protectorate in early 1942,[130] a new officer, Tom W. Sexton,[131] became the foremost wireless operator at *Tulagi Radio* (Clemens, 1998).

[130] Mr. R.S. Taylor, Chief Radio Officer to Fiji, in Western Pacific High Commission Gazette, May, 1942. ("BSI Officers to Move to Other Territories", June, 1942).
[131] Tommy Sexton, formerly an AWA Ltd. marine radio officer. Commissioned as a Lt. in the BSIPDF. Awarded the US Silver Star for wartime services.

Taylor did not return immediately to the BSIP as he was granted leave in December, 1942 for military service and was commissioned ("Service changes", 1942 December). However, he was back in the BSIP by February, 1943 (as a Lieutenant, later to be promoted to Captain) and was assigned to Malaita to take over from Sexton (Jersey, 2007). Sadly, as mentioned previously, Taylor died in 1944 while travelling aboard a US aircraft which went missing in bad weather.[132] His place as CWO was taken by Rupert Bastin,[133] who had been CWO in the GEIC and who was appointed to the BSIP in 1943 where he worked in intelligence communication areas and took over Taylor's role before returning to the GEIC (Bastin, Rupert Stanley, personal file. WPHC 32/CPF72).

In April, 1941 the Colonial Office in London provided the WPHC with new call-signs for all the existing *Teleradio* stations which were previously assigned a VQJ designation. Under the new rules, Auki became ZGJ, Gizo ZGJ2, Kirakira ZGJ3, Aola ZGJ4, Tunnibulli ZGJ5, Faisi ZGJ6 and Mundi Mundi ZGJ7 (Colonial Office to High Commissioner, April 23, 1941). The network was ready to play its role should war enter the Protectorate.

[132] Taylor was posted missing on the 1st May, 1944. His name is listed on the Allied War Memorial in New Caledonia.

[133] Rupert Stanley Bastin, formerly in charge of Victorian Police communications. Chief Wireless Officer, GEIC 16th April, 1941. Captain in the BSIPDF and later Lt. In the RANVR.

Figure 14: Coastwatcher Clemens with Police and Scouts.

Coastwatcher Captain Martin Clemens with Solomon Islands Police and Scouts, 1942. (l to r standing: Daniel Pule, Martin Clemens, Andrew Langabaea. l to r seated: Olorere, Gumu, Chaparuka, Chaku)

[Credit: US Marine Corps/Australian War Memorial No. 043648)

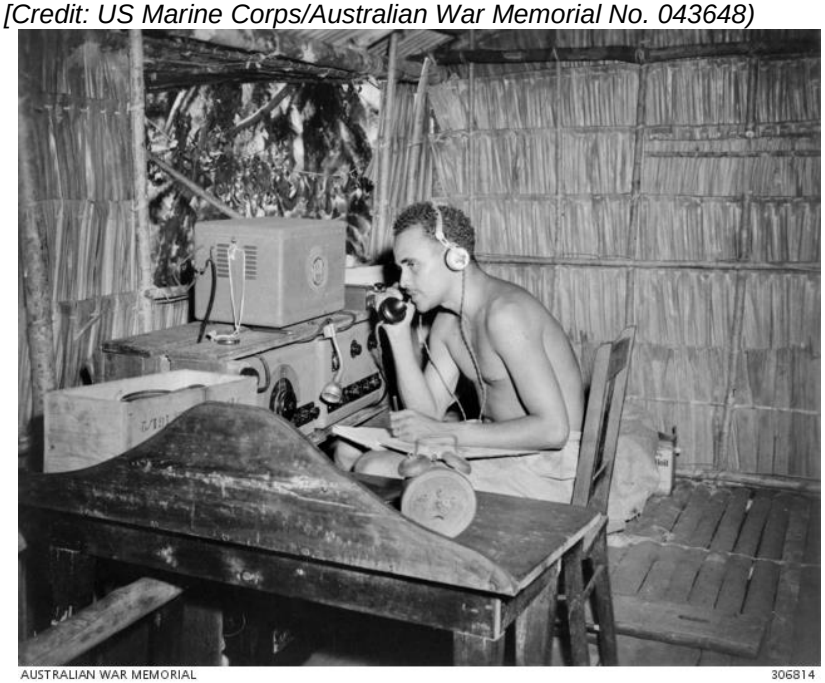

Figure 15: Sgt.William (Billy) Bennett MM operating Teleradio.

Sgt. William (Billy) Bennett MM operating an AWA 3BZ Teleradio at the Seghe coastwatching station (ZGJ5), New Georgia. (1943) Bennett went on to a career with the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBS) and later became Chairman of the Board of the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC).

[Credit: H.A. Mackenzie/Australian War Memorial No. 306814]

CHAPTER X:
RADIO GOES TO WAR
(c. 1941-1943)

> 12 noon. What a day! On combat radio I hear that Tulagi is taken and at 12.05 Marines land on Gavutu. 17:15hrs. This is better than a football match, but what I wouldn't give for a beer and a grilled steak. Wireless reception fading badly.
>
> Captain Martin Clemens,[134] Vungana, Guadalcanal. 7th August, 1942 (M. Clemens, personal communication, June, 1982)

Japan attacks

On the 7th December, 1941 forces of the Empire of Japan attacked the US naval and air bases at Pearl Harbour in Honolulu, Hawaii. Almost simultaneously, attacks were made on the British colonial possessions of Hong Kong and Malaya. By January, 1942 the Japanese military had occupied Rabaul in New Guinea (defeating the Australian forces there), with Singapore and the Dutch East Indies falling a month later.

In the latter part of January, Tulagi received its first air raid when a Japanese Kawanishi[135] flying boat bombed the area, aiming specifically at the imposing lattice-work structure of the wireless station mast, perhaps imagining it was a high-powered communication centre (Feldt, 1946). In subsequent attacks, which became almost daily in February as bombers swept in from Rabaul, further concentration was made on the radio mast.

Hearing of a war situation developing, Jonathan Fifi'i, then a young student, went by boat from Malaita to Tulagi to see what was happening and remembers two warplanes flying overhead before one "returned and bombed the wireless station. A second bomb hit the Resident Commissioner's house and a third was dropped on the prison" (White, 1991, p. 37). Interestingly, despite regular bomb attacks and machine-gun fire from Japanese aircraft, the wireless mast at Tulagi was not destroyed (Horton, 1970). Many bomb craters

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[134] Captain (later Major) Warwick Frederick Martin Clemens, MC, BSIPDF (b.1915-d.2009). District administrator, coastwatcher.

[135] The Kawanishi Type 97 flying boat (known to the Allies by the code name 'Mavis') was a four-engined, long-range Japanese aircraft.

were in evidence around the tower after Japanese near misses, but the only damage was to the wireless operator's abode which suffered from the blasts, the CWO's entire treasured gramophone collection being scattered across the area (Clemens, 1998). *Tulagi Radio* was finally knocked out of action when US naval ships, taking part in the invasion of the island in August, 1942, were ordered to "put fire on the radio station" (Miller, 1949, p. 38) and shell it to make it unserviceable.

In reality, the wireless station was old and almost useless, distracting the bombers from the more important target, the RAAF wireless equipment at Tanambogo. The *Tulagi Radio* operator had even told Feldt, during his 1939 visit, that "If the Japs come here and ask me where the radio station is, and I show them this, they will shoot me for concealing the real one" (Feldt, 1946, p. 80). The RAAF transmitters were damaged several times, but were kept in operation (Gillison, 1962).

Chaotic scenes

In early 1942, after daily bombing and just as much dithering, the Resident Commissioner made the decision for civilians to leave the BSIP, the departure of the main body of around two hundred expatriates aboard the MV *Morinda* on the 7th February, 1942 being a less than edifying spectacle (Bennett, 1987). "The Europeans at Tulagi left in a hurry and Melanesians for the first time saw white people in a panic" (Fox, 1967, p. 57), wrote long-standing resident and former missionary, Charles Fox. "I found the place in a state of hysteria" (Clemens, 1998, p. 56), recalled Martin Clemens, who also evidenced considerable looting underway.

Although some missionaries and planters had stayed behind in their own locations (where many performed with outstanding bravery after the Japanese occupation, several losing their lives), the departure of the main bulk of the expatriate population was watched by Solomon Islanders with considerable trepidation. Efforts were made by some employers to repatriate their indigenous plantation labour forces back to their own islands, while the Chinese population was very much left to its own devices. The repercussions of the departure of Europeans echoed down the years, the evacuation being a turning-point in relations between 'master and servant'. Never again would the governed see their colonial rulers in the same light.

With Japanese land and sea forces now advancing rapidly down the island chain through Bougainville and the BSIP from their base in Rabaul, the expatriate coastwatchers were all given military rank in an effort to protect them (rather than be seen as civilian spies) should they be captured. It was a forlorn hope, given the treatment which had been handed out to foreign nationals taken prisoner by the Japanese elsewhere, beheading by sword being a common practice. This was to be the fate of nine New Zealand radio operators captured on Tarawa and Ocean Island (GEIC) in 1942. All were civilians and all were beheaded, their memorial stone (erected after the war) reading “In the service of their country they faced death with courage undaunted” (Memorials in GEIC to radio operators murdered by the Japanese at Betio, Tarawa and Ocean Island in 1942. WPHC F.32/88).

To be caught with a *Teleradio* would mean immediate execution, for both expatriates and their indigenous colleagues alike. Jack Read[136] and Paul Mason[137] on Bougainville both became Lieutenants in the RANVR, as did Don Macfarlan[138] on Guadalcanal. District Officers, such as Martin Clemens and Donald Kennedy,[139] were commissioned as Captains in the BSIPDF, with the Resident Commissioner, W.S. Marchant, taking the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Solomon Islands Scouts, who worked closely with the expatriate coastwatchers and without whom the network would not have operated, were recruited into the BSIPDF (Feldt, 1946; Gill, 1968; Horton, 1970; Clemens, 1998).

With increasingly heavy daily bombing raids on Tulagi and Gavutu, Read and Mason swung into action, reporting *en clair* (by voice and not in code) as they saw Rabaul-based aircraft overhead Bougainville and heading southwards to their targets. Read and Mason’s radio messages were flashed to Port Moresby where there was a communication station at Wonga (Port Moresby) and quickly re-transmitted to *Townsville Radio* (military headquarters) which rapidly distributed the message to the BSIP and to the US main fleet base at Pearl Harbour (Durrant, 1987). Later in the war, after Guadalcanal and Tulagi were re-occupied by the Allies, the intelligence from Read and Mason was to become critical as it gave an opportunity for Allied aircraft to intercept the Japanese airborne raiders before they reached their targets.

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[136] Lt. Jack Read, DSC, RANVR, (b.1905-d.1992) operating in northern Bougainville.
[137] Lt. Paul E. Mason, DSC, RANVR, (b.1901-d.1972) operating in southern Bougainville.
[138] Lt. (later Lt. Cdr) D.S. Macfarlan, RANVR (b.1908-d.?).
[139] Captain (later Major) D.G. Kennedy, DSO. (b.1898-d.1967) District Officer and Coastwatcher. Based on Ysabel and, later, New Georgia.

Marchant relocates from Tulagi

In February and into early May, 1942, it was apparent to Marchant that Tulagi and environs could not be defended and that he should move his key coastwatching headquarters elsewhere. Rather than nearby Guadalcanal, he chose Auki on the island of Malaita (about 45 miles away). At the time, the District Officer was Captain Charles F. Bengough[140] and he advised that the Government building there was, obviously, known to Japanese forces and would be quickly put out of action should a radio station be established.

Instead, Marchant opted for a secret location in the bush, well away from the main housing area. That place, according to Arnon Ngwadili,[141] was Fusilango (White, et al., 1988). The tiny settlement of Fusilango was some three and a half miles higher into the jungle behind Auki ("Site MALA10: the Secret Wartime BSIP Government Station", n.d.) and at an altitude of 3,000 feet (Jersey, 2007). It comprised well-camouflaged leaf houses.[142]

The expatriate coastwatching team with Marchant at Fusilango included the BSIP CWO, Lt. T.O. Sexton, RANVR, Lt. H.W. Bullen, BSIPDF,[143] as cipher officer, and, later, the Right Reverend Walter Baddeley, Bishop of Melanesia.[144] With them was their loyal indigenous team, without whom none of the coastwatchers could have carried out their work. Lt. Cdr. Macfarlan, under instructions from Feldt, had opted to operate a station from Guadalcanal instead. In January, 1943 Lt. Robert S. Taylor arrived back from overseas and replaced Tom Sexton in the CWO position. He was joined in his radio operator role at Fusilango by Sgt. Clifford R. Kurtz[145] of the US Army, said to be the only American soldier to have been assigned to Malaita on duty during the war (Jersey, 2007).

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[140] Charles N. (Norman) F. Bengough, District Officer, Malaita and later Acting Resident Commissioner. Killed when shot-down while on a reconnaissance mission in an RNZAF Hudson aircraft in 1943.

[141] Arnon Ngwadili from Onepusu, Malaita. BSIP policeman pre-war. Joined the BSIPDF in 1939. Was with Marchant on Malaita and later, in 1942, accompanied him to Guadalcanal. (White, Gegeo, Akin, & Watson-Gegeo,1988, pp. 197-198).

[142] Locally constructed, indigenous-style dwellings made of bamboo and other bush materials.

[143] H.W. Bullen, formerly with the Melanesian Mission, BSIP.

[144] Walter Herbert Baddeley (b.1894-d.1960), Bishop of Melanesia (1932-1947) He was a decorated World War I officer (DSO, MC and Bar) and stayed in the BSIP throughout World War II. See also Moore (2013).

[145] Kurtz had been a radio operator with the 164th Infantry on Guadalcanal.

Reports emanating from the various locations of ZGJ stations in the BSIP were sent (by clear voice or in basic *Playfair* code) to Malaita, where they were re-coded in high-grade cipher and sent by Sexton to the RAN Intelligence Officer in Vila (New Hebrides). This was a distance of 700 miles and at the extreme range of *Teleradio* equipment. “Sexton performed miracles” (Clemens, 1998, p. 40) in regularly reaching Vila by radio where no-one else could, noted Martin Clemens (ZGJ-4 on Guadalcanal). “As in other walks of life, the professional radio operator is far ahead of the amateur” (Feldt, 1946, p. 82), commented Lt. Cdr. Feldt on Sexton’s performance.

When atmospheric conditions did not allow for direct contact between Malaita and Vila, Sexton would send messages to Vanikoro (VQO) in the Santa Cruz islands, some 400 miles distant, where Mrs. Ruby Boye,[146] coastwatcher and wife of the manager of the timber company, would re-transmit the messages onwards to Vila using her *Teleradio* (Gill, 1968)**.** Clemens never personally met Ruby Boye but, years after the war, recalled her voice which, he said, “always sounded so cheerful and imperturbable that it did one good to hear her” (Clemens, 1998, p. 43)**.**

Mrs. Boye, who taught herself Morse, had operated the radio equipment since 1939, so was quite proficient. Her whereabouts were known to the Japanese and, early in 1942, she recalled an accented voice coming through on the *Teleradio* “Calling Mrs. Boye, Japanese commander say you get out...or else” (“Coastwatcher Ruby Boye- one woman’s war”, 1988, p. 229-231). She was also well-known to the Americans. One day, a Catalina flying-boat landed on the lagoon at Vanikoro carrying a group of US officers, one of whom who approached her husband saying “I’ve come to meet that marvellous woman who runs the radio” (“Coastwatcher Ruby Boye: one woman’s war”, 1988, p. 230). It was Admiral William ‘Bull’ Halsey, Commander of Allied operations in the South Pacific Area (SPA). Ruby Boye’s skills in forwarding messages to Vila from Malaita were legendary. Once the signals had reached the New Hebrides, the details were rapidly despatched to headquarters in Australia (originally Townsville, but later also Brisbane) and, via circuitous routes, to a range of agencies, including the US Navy at Pearl Harbour.

[146] Mrs. Ruby Boye was later commissioned as an Honorary Third Officer WRANS and eventually received the British Empire Medal for her services.

Tulagi evacuated

While the coastwatching stations reported on Japanese movements across the BSIP, the main thrust of the naval, land and air power of Japan was bearing down on Tulagi itself. On 2nd May, 1942, after Marchant relocated to Malaita, the RAAF base at Tanambogo destroyed all of its equipment and stores. Heavy air raids continued and, on the 3rd and 4th May, 1942, the 3rd Kure Special Landing Force (from the cruiser *Okinoshima*) came ashore and took Tulagi and Gavutu (Horton, 1970). The long-expected invasion had arrived and the BSIP stood alone, only its coastwatchers and *Teleradios* hidden in the bush able to bring the news to an outside world.

The situation in the BSIP looked bleak. Australia was under threat in New Guinea, 2nd AIF soldiers were fighting in the Middle East or had been taken prisoner in Singapore and could do little to assist. There would be no help from Britain as it was embroiled in its own fight for survival against forces on a range of fronts. Such was the perilous situation of the 'mother country', in 1942 the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London even contacted the WPHC to ask for radio spare parts (from UK-made equipment) as "There is a serious shortage of wireless transmitting valves owing to increasing service requirements" (War restrictions on supplies- wireless equipment, January 11, 1942). The BSIP Resident Commissioner responded that they had none, as all transmitters in the Protectorate were of Australian origin and spares were sourced there, not the UK.

With the administrative capital of the BSIP occupied, large numbers of Japanese troops were also in place in many other islands and were actively seeking any Europeans or coastwatchers who might have stayed behind. To assist with its own intelligence gathering, Japan activated its pre-war knowledge and linkages (*viz*. Mr. Terushige Ishimoto, a Japanese civilian who had worked in the commercial sector at Tulagi) and 'tracker dogs' were even brought in as the search for coastwatchers and their vital radios continued. The importance of the intelligence generated by the *Teleradio* teams was not under-estimated by the occupiers.

At the same time, indigenous Solomon Islanders were put under huge pressure by the Japanese military to betray their former British rulers, to see the new arrivals as their friends, and to lead Japanese patrols to seek and destroy the coastwatchers. In the face of enormous hardships and with great courage, the Solomon Islanders stood firm. They often

paid a price for their loyalty through intimidation and, worse, the theft of food and small animals (pigs, chickens etc.) from their gardens.

Radio goes to the hills

When Martin Clemens took over the District Office at Aola on Guadalcanal from Dick Horton, he inherited a fine group of Solomon Islanders, including a police detachment led by Corporal Andrew Langabaea and Lance Corporal Koimata. Two constables first class, Beato and Peli, were joined by three second class, Kao, Deke and Chaparuka, and two third class, Londoviko and Chimi. He signed-on Dovu, Garimani, Gumu and Chaku and this group, along with his senior clerk, Daniel Pule,[147] and an assistant, Bingiti,[148] essentially became one of the famous Solomons Scouts teams which operated behind Japanese lines on Guadalcanal. In June, 1942 Clemens was sent a reinforcement from Malaita in the shape of Sergeant-Major Jacob Charles Vouza[149] a formidable indigenous man who had a reputation for doing things his own way. He went on to become the most decorated and internationally known Solomon Islander of World War II (Clemens, 1998).

Accompanying the party was a Fijian medical practitioner, Dr. Eroni Leauli, who had operated many dispensaries on Guadalcanal pre-war. He later (in 1944) became a broadcasting pioneer in the BSIP by presenting news broadcasts in Solomon Islands Pijin through the US Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) station on Guadalcanal (Hadlow, 2009).

In May, 1942 Clemens evacuated his group from Aola on the coast to a village in the hills, where the *Teleradio* was set up. In modern parlance, the AWA 3BZ model could be called ‘a serious piece of kit’ as it comprised three major parts, a transmitter, a receiver and a loudspeaker. Along with those components were steel boxes for packing the parts for transportation, plus large, acid-filled six-volt batteries, a small gasoline engine to generate electricity, fuel, oil, spare parts and tools. The *Teleradio* was portable only in the sense that a team had to be on standby to carry the whole set if a move became necessary.

[147] Formerly in the District Office, Gizo, where he was replaced by Esau Hiele. Pule was later awarded the British Empire Medal.
[148] Bingiti later won the US Legion of Merit decoration for courageous service near Munda.
[149] Jacob (later Sir Jacob) Charles Vouza (b.1900-d.1984), KBE, GM, KPM.

When, in the face of threatened Japanese attacks, Clemens headed for Paripao, which was about 160 metres above sea level from Aola, he required 190 Solomon Islander carriers to lift the radio and all the other office stores and equipment (Clemens, 1998). With four men assigned to carrying the main office safe and another sixteen or so for the AWA *Teleradio*, one can only imagine the difficulties which ensued for the village men as they struggled up steep and slippery jungle paths bearing the cumbersome load. Cartage of the batteries was a particular worry as the acid would spill if they were dropped, or if they were not carried at the correct angle. Later, Clemens moved camp further up to an even higher and more remote location, Vungana, and, eventually, to Vuchicoro, requiring the equipment to again be carried and installed.

Wireless traffic rapidly increases

By late May, 1942 Japanese foot patrols were reconnoitering Lunga and Mamara on Guadalcanal. Coastwatcher Snowy Rhoades[150] (VQJ-10) on the north-west corner of the island was transmitting reports by his Scouts about “Japs also at Tenaru and Kukum joy-riding on horses” (M. Clemens, personal communication, 1982-1984), while, in June, a Japanese survey party was on the grass plains behind Lunga, the eventual site of the airfield so vital to the later defence of the island and the region. In his mountain retreat, Clemens sent reports (gathered by his Scouts) to Marchant on Malaita. ”ZGJ4 to ZGJ. ZGJ4 to ZGJ. I have several groups for you. ZGJ to ZGJ4. Come in, carry on. K-Kitty, T-Tom, E-Edward, X-Extra, Q-Quadrant, A-Arthur, U-Uncle, Y-Yellow” (M. Clemens, personal communication, 1982-1986). Decoded, this meant “Large schooner at Taivu. 30 Japs ashore with much cargo”.

Daniel Pule provided Clemens with intelligence ‘gold’, a map he had hand-drawn of the Lunga plains area showing Japanese workshops, trenches, tents and a wireless station. Clemens radioed the information to Malaita and it was duly forwarded to Townsville. An urgent reply was received asking for an exact indication of where the Japanese had located their wireless station. Clearly, this was to be a target for the first Allied bombers which attacked the area. Clemens was able to pinpoint it in a return message about ten minutes later (Lord, 1977).

[150] Lt. Cdr. F.A. Rhoades, (b.1895-d.?). RANVR, DSC (US), Silver Star Coastwatcher and plantation manager (Lavoro, Guadalcanal).

Elsewhere in the BSIP, other coastwatchers were reporting increasing movements of shipping and aircraft. On the island of Ysabel, Donald Kennedy (ZGJ6), accompanied by Geoffrey Kuper,[151] was sending messages identifying the composition of enemy forces. Kennedy was later to move to New Georgia (ZGJ5) where he carried out distinguished and courageous acts against the Japanese, his right-hand Solomon Islanders being, at various times, Harry Wickham[152] and William 'Billy' Bennett.

Unbeknown to most in the BSIP, the Allies were preparing a counter-attack to take Guadalcanal, their centre of attention being the airstrip then being constructed on the Lunga plains. Massive naval fleets were gathering and US Marines were travelling from their training base in New Zealand to be in place for a simultaneous operation against Tulagi and Lunga. Their need for accurate intelligence from the coastwatchers increased exponentially, especially in relation to the operational capability of the airfield. The key issue to be resolved was whether the airfield was either ready to take aircraft or was actually already serviceable. If the Japanese had operational capability for their aircraft, the task of the invading Allied force would be multiplied ten-fold.

On the 4th August, 1942, just three days before the Allies landed, Clemens sent a Police patrol to near Kukum and they reported back that they had seen a group of four Zero fighter aircraft, followed by another two, coming from the south to an area behind Kukum and "descending below tree level" (M. Clemens, personal communication, 1982-1986). Such was the importance of this information, Clemens also reported by wireless to ZGJ that he had "closely questioned [the Police] but they strongly maintained they [the Zeros] came down on land".

Allies knock out Japanese radio

On the 7th August, 1942 a major amphibious landing by US Marines, backed by heavy air raids from carrier-based aircraft, was underway on Beach Red (at Lunga on Guadalcanal) and on the island of Tulagi. The landing on Guadalcanal was unopposed (the Japanese construction troops there abandoning their base and melting into the jungle), while intense fighting continued for days against entrenched defences on Tulagi.

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[151] Sgt. Geoffrey H. Kuper, BEM, BSIPDF.
[152] Lt. H. Wickham, BSIPDF (b.1882-d.1962). Coastwatcher at Munda.

The Japanese military radio station on Tulagi began transmitting urgent messages to Rabaul that a major attack was in progress. As the Allied forces gained the ascendancy, the Japanese radio signals began to decrease, the radio operators realising the hopelessness of the situation. “And so the last moving message was received”, noted the Japanese Eighth Fleet War Diary, “praying for a decisive battle to the last man and for permanent fortunes of war. Thereafter, communication ceased” (Griffith, 1963, p. 41). Other Japanese wireless stations at Cape Astrolabe in north Malaita[153] and at Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal[154] continued to operate until they too, were eventually overwhelmed and put out of action (Merillat 1982; Miller 1949; Jersey 2007).

On Guadalcanal, a US Navy radio communications station was planned to be put ashore with the first wave of Marines. However, in the haste of the landing boats to clear the beach, the equipment and supplies for the wireless set-up remained on-board, leaving only short-range combat field radios available to the forces on the island. Fortuitously, a Marine technician (by the name of Ferranto) came across a captured Japanese transmitter and, after tinkering with it, had it serviceable and on the air with a power of 500 watts just five days later (Merillat, 1982).

Also arriving on the beach that morning were civilian war correspondents, Richard Tregaskis (United Press) and Robert Miller (International News Service), US Marines Public Relations Officer, Lt. Herb Merillat, and Combat Correspondent, Sgt. Jim Hurlbut. They were soon joined by fellow Marines, Edward J. Burman, Richard ‘Diggory’ Venn and Leopole Jupite (H. Merillat, personal communication, 1985). Their first-hand stories of the conflict, bringing to the world news of a battle which was already becoming known as a potential ‘turning point’ in the Pacific war, were censored and could only be sent out when the radio facilities were not being used for operational purposes. However, during the first ten days of the campaign, Tregaskis and Miller were able to transmit a few brief despatches (Kirby & Harris, 1948).

Entertainment for the troops and aviators huddled in their tents, bivouacs and fox-holes came mainly in the form of ‘listening-in’, just as pre-war BSIP residents overcame their isolation through tuning their radio sets to foreign stations. “On our two portables, we’ve managed to pick up WCKY, Cincinnati, KIRO, Seattle, and WBT, Charlotte N.C.” recalled

[153] Destroyed by a joint US Army and BSIPDF operation in November, 1942.
[154] Captured by the US Army 147th Infantry in February, 1943.

air ace Lt. Col. Richard C. Mangrum,[155] "but KNX, Los Angeles comes in best of all" (Mangrum, 1943, p. 84). The preferred listening time to US stations on faraway Guadalcanal was in the twilight and early darkness between 7pm and 8pm as, after that, "Australian broadcasts come in so strong they drown the American signals out" (Mangrum, 1943, p. 84).

However, just as the coastwatchers had found that their AWA 3BZ radios could be temperamental when operating in colder locations where condensation was high (such as at Clemens' location in the damp mists of the altitude at Vungana), so the US Marines also had problems with their Signals Corps issue voice radio sets. Moisture and corrosion in the tropical climate was an enemy to wireless equipment and it "affected the circuits and metallic contacts, altered frequencies and occasionally drowned out sets completely" (Miller, 1949, p. 316).

Given the jungle conditions, the US military also had difficulties in moving heavy radio sets into operational areas where there were no roads or motor transport available. Even the so-called 'portable' SCR 284 (manufactured for the US Signals Corps by the Crosley Corporation), with a transmission range of seven miles, weighed 110 lbs[156] and required a team of several soldiers to carry it. Meanwhile, the easy to move, hand-held 'walkie talkie' sets (SCR 194 and 195) had a range of two miles, but proved ineffective in the thick jungle (Miller, 1949). Wire communication was used extensively where wireless was inoperable and the Marines even broadcast messages by loudspeaker to Japanese soldiers in an effort to get them to surrender (Miller, 1949).

'The Coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal...'

The 'industrial scale' intensity of the fighting on Guadalcanal was a shock to both the Allies and their Solomon Islander counterparts alike. The brutal battles lasted for months and later extended through other BSIP islands, such as New Georgia, Choiseul and Vella Lavella. As much as possible (Kennedy[157] in New Georgia being a specific exception), the coastwatchers were instructed to simply observe and report, not to fight. When setting up the system, Lt. Cdr. Eric Feldt had chosen the codeword *Ferdinand* for the network, a

[155] Mangrum was said to be the first pilot to land a combat plane on Henderson Field, a PBY Catalina having already used the runway previously.
[156] Equivalent to 50 kgs.
[157] See Kennedy's remarkable life story in Chapter 11 (Laracy, 2013).

name he took from a children's book in which Ferdinand the bull sat smelling the flowers, rather than showing aggression (Feldt, 1946).

Once the Allies had dominated the immediate battlefield of the Lunga area of Guadalcanal, the airfield was upgraded and named Henderson Field.[158] On the 14th August, 1942 Lt. Cdr. H.A. Mackenzie, who had been the Deputy Supervising Intelligence Officer at Vila, arrived to establish a wireless communication centre. A large dug-out (previously occupied by the Japanese) was chosen in the north-west area within the airfield perimeter and the station, code-named KEN, was on the air the following day. It was manned by both coastwatchers (Mackenzie, Macfarlan and others) and US radio operators (Feldt, 1946).

On Bougainville, coastwatchers Jack Read[159] and Paul Mason[160] had a perfect view of the Japanese aircraft flying south-east from Rabaul towards Guadalcanal and regularly sent messages "24 torpedo bombers headed yours" (Hadlow, 2012) being one of the most famous, to ZGJ, Malaita which then sent them onwards to Townsville, where they were flashed to the US Navy at Pearl Harbour and back to Henderson Field in a matter of minutes. This gave the ships moored off Guadalcanal time to scatter and for US fighter aircraft to take-off and position themselves above the waves of incoming attackers.

These actions were not only responsible for great air victories, but also for one of the most commonly misquoted comments about the coastwatchers from the Pacific campaigns of World War II. Attributed to Admiral William F. 'Bull' Halsey, USN, Allied Commander of the South Pacific Area, the passage of time has slightly changed the context of the statement to become "The coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the Pacific" (Horton, 1970, p. 247). These words are also inscribed on the *Pride of Our Nation* monument[161] in Honiara, present-day capital of Solomon Islands.

In reality, Halsey's message of appreciation was worded differently and, rather than being of a general nature, was addressed specifically to Read and Mason. According to Eric Feldt, who saw a written copy of the message, Halsey had said that "the intelligence

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[158] Named after Major Lofton Henderson, a US Marines fighter pilot killed at the Battle of Midway.
[159] Operating in northern Bougainville.
[160] Operating in southern Bougainville.
[161] A monument constructed under the auspices of the Solomons Scouts and Coastwatchers Trust and inaugurated on the 7th August, 2012. See Hadlow (2011).

signalled from Bougainville had saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal had saved the South Pacific" (Feldt, 1946, p. 147).

The groundbreaking publication, *Island Representations of World War II* (White & Lindstrom, 1989), which documents the wartime experiences of many Pacific islanders, mentions the famous quote and adds that "What he [Halsey] failed to say was that the Solomon Islanders saved the coastwatchers" (White & Lindstrom, 1989, p. 329). James B. Boutilier points out that without local support, the (mostly) expatriate coastwatchers "would never have been able to collect the intelligence that made the coastwatching system so valuable, nor would they have been able to survive in Japanese-held territory" (White & Lindstrom, 1989, p. 329).

Eric Feldt in his wartime reminiscence, *The Coastwatchers*, also gives some conditional credit to local involvement, by saying that "It is the story, too, of the bravery, the loyalty, and the ingenuity of many tropical natives, and of the perfidy or weakness of others" (Feldt, 1946, p. 3), while Australia's official history of the war also mentions "the general loyalty of the natives" (Gill, 1968, p. 123). Apart from the books published after the war by the expatriate coastwatchers themselves, in which they tell of their own affection for those with whom they served, general recognition of the courage of Solomon Islanders and others who rallied to the Allied cause in the region (Papuans, New Guineans, Fijians, Gilbertese etc.) has been, with some notable exceptions (usually books and articles written by scholars) almost a mere footnote to history. (See Kwai, 2013). Few of those Pacific islanders who fought alongside their expatriate Allies have written their autobiographies.

War moves north

After tumultuous sea, land and air battles around Guadalcanal, the victorious Allies continued to harry Japanese forces as they retreated northwards through the islands. Bitter fighting continued on New Georgia, Vella Lavella, Choiseul and in other key areas, the coastwatchers there continuing to play their invaluable reporting role. On New Georgia, Milton Talasasa, the young man who had pioneered wireless with the Roviana mission in 1923, was now using his skills as a radio operator attached to the US 37th Infantry Division.

However, with combat operations virtually over on Guadalcanal, life began to follow a more regular routine, despite the malarial mosquitoes, the rats which disturbed sleep and

the toads. “Approach a dead Jap and you will find two or three of them [toads] perched on the corpse, feeding off the flies” (“Toads, flies and mud”, 1943), wrote Australian war correspondent, Winston Turner. However, by later in 1943, the scene had changed dramatically and, while *Camp Lunga* on Guadalcanal still had endless mud, it had been transformed into a place which had electric light in the tents, surfaced roads, “well-cooked food, film shows and servicemen’s shops” (“Transformation of Guadalcanal”, 1943).

Such was the positive change in wartime conditions that even two of the coastwatching *Teleradio* stations, ZGJ4 (Clemens on Guadalcanal) and ZGJ5 (Kennedy on New Georgia) had closed, or were in abeyance, by September, 1943. The key station ZGJ (Auki) had remained on Malaita, while a new station, VQJ, had been established by Macfarlan near Henderson Field at Tenaru (Guadalcanal). Other existing *Teleradios* were ZGJ3 (San Cristobal), ZGJ6 (Ysabel) and the privately-owned VQO (Santa Cruz) (Telegram No. 275, WPHC F.68/21).

With the more settled atmosphere now pertaining around Henderson Field, not to mention the continued development of the huge Allied logistics and rear-echelon hub at neighbouring *Camp Lunga* (also known as *Camp Guadal*), the need for more information and entertainment facilities for service personnel was becoming self-evident. It was time for locally-based radio broadcasting to enter the scene and bring a touch of normality for the troops far from home.

CHAPTER XI:
THE AMERICAN YEARS
(c. 1943-1945)

> It was imperative in my mind that the OWI,[162] or any other propaganda Organization, not be in charge, nor indeed be present, when we were broadcasting to troops. One of the things I was sure of when I was called to Washington to make the master plan for the joint Navy and Army committee was that our troops would hear the same news service that they could hear were they at home and that their families were currently listening to. (T. H. Lewis, personal communication, 1987)
>
> Colonel Thomas H. A. Lewis
> Chief of the US Armed Forces
> Radio Service (AFRS), 1942-45

Radio for the troops

At the outset of the war, authorities in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the USA were ill-prepared for the provision of information and entertainment services to a mobile military which would be fighting simultaneously on fronts across the globe. In the case of Great Britain, troops in action in North Africa were the first to have their own radio station when the British Forces Experimental Station,[163] Algiers took to the airwaves in 1943 (Taylor, 1983). The Australian experience in World War II saw the ABC initially providing news and entertainment services in the Middle East and, later, the Australian Army Amenities Service (AAAS) establishing small radio stations, primarily in New Guinea and South-East Asia (Hadlow, 2014a).

In the USA, soldiers on the mainland or in Alaska or Hawaii were well-served by existing radio stations, this being the 'golden age' of the medium. However, for those US troops assigned elsewhere, receiving a 'touch of home' through the wireless was not an option, until Colonel Jack Harris, Deputy Director of the Radio Branch of the Army's Bureau of

[162] Office of War Information.
[163] Later, the British established radio stations at garrisons across the world under the name British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS).

Public Relations, was instructed to start a programme, transmitted via shortwave, which brought sports news and events to soldiers abroad. It was entitled *Your Grandstand Seat* and was the first programme broadcast overseas to US troops (J. Harris, personal communication, 1983).

Meanwhile, the US Marines had established a 'Marine Battle Broadcasting System' which was, in essence, a means of reporting important 'on the ground' news events in combat zones. Correspondents recorded their eye-witness accounts onto disc (the records known as 'instantaneous electronic transcriptions') which were then flown back to the USA for broadcast. The first such recordings from Guadalcanal were made in March, 1943 by Lt. Jack DeChant, Sgt. Jim Hardin and Sgt. Howard Bickerstaff using a cumbersome and technically delicate Presto K-recorder.[164] However, the reports, which included the sound of the air-raid warning siren at Henderson Field, as well as anti-aircraft fire at the same location,[165] were not broadcast during the war due to censorship restrictions (Kirby & Harris, 1948). Recordings were also made of "the natives of the islands on which our Marines are stationed" (Marine Battle Broadcasting System, 1944, pp. 56-57), an encouraging sign of the more egalitarian nature of the American approach to indigenous people in the British colonies than held by the empire-builders themselves.

A Presto Y-recorder reached Guadalcanal in 1943 but went unused as a recording device, only being operated to play records for entertainment instead. The next step was the provision of portable, low-powered radio transmitters and turntables (stored in five suitcases) which were, in reality, fully mobile radio broadcast stations, operated by either US Signal Corps personnel or Marine Corps engineers, and which could move with the troops (Kirby & Harris, 1948).

One of the small mobile American Expeditionary Stations (AES) was reported to be in use by the Army's Special Services Division on New Georgia by July, 1943 and another, later, on Vella Lavella (Tompkins, n.d.). Martin Clemens distinctly recalled the New Georgia station as there was a Solomon Islander "thumping" bamboo band entertaining him over lunch at Munda and "Their signature tune was *You Are My Sunshine* and this, in fact, their

[164] In the pre-audiotape era, equipment for recording 'direct to disc' made by the Presto Recording Corporation, New York. It consisted of an amplifier, precision disc-cutter and turntable and was capable of both playing gramophone recordings and cutting new discs.
[165] Audiotapes from Library of Congress in author's possession.

recording, became the opening for the broadcast" (M. Clemens, personal communication, 1982; G. Zoloveke, personal communication, 1982). The Munda station also broadcast news in Roviana, the main vernacular language of the area, and had a half hour programme for Solomon Islanders on Sunday afternoons, presented by Esau Hiele and Willie Paia. Bill Gina broadcast news on the station in Pijin (M. Clemens, personal communication, 1982; G. Zoloveke, personal communication, 1982).

History is made

The technological era of the 1940s was one in which equipment was cumbersome, while accessing long-distance, international communication facilities was difficult. This was particularly so for war correspondents in combat zones. Top CBS reporter, William J. Dunn, had been attempting to report stories back to the USA from the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA) theatre of operations, but, for technical reasons, with limited success. In Papua, he was reliant on the US Signals Corps and AWA Ltd. to transmit his voice pieces and was suspicious that the delay in being able to do so had a political reason. It wasn't until December, 1943 that he received news that a transmitter was now available to enable his CBS voice reports to reach Sydney from Port Moresby, with an onwards relay to the USA (Dunn, 1988).

In the competitive world of war reporting, one of Dunn's main network protagonists was the equally well-known correspondent, H.V. Kaltenborn,[166] of NBC. Working with the military wireless engineers on Guadalcanal, Kaltenborn pulled off a programming coup when, on the 25th October, 1943, the island linked 'live' with the USA for a broadcast contribution ("the first broadcast in history from Guadalcanal" in the South Pacific Area of operations, as it was reported by the NBC)[167] into the weekly programme *The Army Hour* ("How the Army Hour picked up Guadalcanal", 1943). Kaltenborn took the credit for organising the 15-minute broadcast from *Camp Lunga* which featured a number of troops telling their stories of combat on Guadalcanal. (A further 15 minutes was inserted into *The Army Hour* 'live' by soldiers speaking from the Red Cross Club in Noumea, New Caledonia.)

[166] Once described as 'a timeless monolith' in US radio.
[167] In reality, the first overseas transmission from the BSIP had been the Empire Day link from Tulagi on the 24th May, 1933. (See Chapter VIII). However, the claim that the Army broadcast was a 'first' specifically from the island of Guadalcanal is correct, as Tulagi is located on a different island.

The compere from the Guadalcanal end of the broadcast was Pfc. Norman Flynn of Elmira, New York and, for censorship reasons, the speakers had to read their input from a prepared script. “It was a historic moment in radio” (“How the Army Hour picked up Guadalcanal”, 1943) announced a report of the event, “for it was the first time such a broadcast had been made (...) from Guadalcanal” (“How the Army Hour picked up Guadalcanal”, 1943). Although the press release crowed that the broadcast went “as smooth as any broadcaster could expect” (“How the Army Hour picked up Guadalcanal”, 1943), Kaltenborn had another view and, in his memoirs, wrote that the broadcast was cut off for security reasons “because an Army sergeant happened to sing one line from a popular song chorus not previously cleared with NBC’s New York office” (Kaltenborn, 1950, p. 152).

Come what may, the technical achievement alone was worthy of merit, the signal travelling via shortwave from Guadalcanal to San Francisco, thence by telephone line to New York. As the NBC itself reported, “When George Putnam[168] said ‘We now take you to Guadalcanal’ and, two seconds later, the radio audience heard the words ‘This is Guadalcanal’, those RCAC engineers realised that there are still thrills even for them in international communication” (“G.I.-the story of The Army Hour”, 1944, pp. 24-59). Another ‘first’ was recognised on the 6th November, 1943 when NBC correspondent George Thomas Folster conducted a news broadcast ‘live’ from Guadalcanal into the network’s programmes (“This is the National Broadcasting Company”, 1944, p. 6). [169]

Allies clash over radio

The competitive commercial nature of the highly influential US radio networks was evident wherever their correspondents travelled and sought facilities to file stories. The NBC had two nationwide networks (Red and Blue) within the USA (Blue later became the ABC network), while CBS and the MBC each ran one national broadcasting chain. Their overseas correspondents were highly respected, feisty, self-opinionated and held considerable sway over their audiences. They also tended to get their own way when they wanted to use wireless facilities to send news commentaries.

[168] Reporter and commentator based at the NBC studios in New York.
[169] On 24th December, 1943 both Guadalcanal and Munda were heard in ‘live’ links in the *Christmas Eve at the Front* programme broadcast on all four US networks.

Inevitably, clashes of media culture took place among the Allies, given that US military personnel came from a cultural background of vibrant commercial broadcasting, while the Commonwealth forces in the BSIP were more attuned to the conservative style of non-commercial public service broadcasting as exemplified by the BBC. The very ideologies which shaped the competing broadcasting structures were at the essence of the difference in thinking and attitude.

In the USA "the airwaves are recognised as belonging to the public' (Schramm & Alexander, 1973, p. 583) and 'in return for the use of a public resource, the broadcaster is responsible for serving the public. The broadcasters are charged with providing a 'free market-place of ideas"' (Schramm & Alexander, 1973, p. 583). However, the model of public service broadcasting fashioned by the BBC's first Director-General, John Reith,[170] has been described in quite different terms and, thus, the BBC's output was reflected in a society which took a more measured and sober approach to the medium. "The Reithian model was born of the late twentieth century intellectual-elite fears that the newly enfranchised British masses would 'lower standards'. Hence the BBC implemented an Arnoldian-vision of cultural intervention to educate and 'civilise' the 'lower' masses in order to preserve 'British cultural standards' and inculcate appropriate high-culture taste" (Louw, 2001).

The notion of a journalist or commentator being something of a superstar and developing a personality following was anathema to the BBC, while American listeners feasted on such famous commentators as Edward R. Murrow, Walter Winchell and Lowell Thomas. The BBC was reluctantly, during World War II, drawn into allowing its previously anonymous news readers into naming themselves on-air simply to ensure that their voices became familiar to the listening audience and they would not be mistaken for enemy propagandists. (Infamous British-born German propaganda broadcaster, *Lord Haw Haw*, William Joyce, was widely listened to in the UK, while secret and clandestine 'black radio' stations were also used by both sides to confuse, create fear and initiate rumours amongst civilian populations.)[171]

[170] Later to become Baron Reith after a long career with the BBC.
[171] In the Pacific, the generic name 'Tokyo Rose' (Iva Toguri and others) was used to name young female broadcasters (some Japanese-American) who broadcast English language propaganda, especially to US servicemen in the Pacific, from Radio Tokyo.

US military perplexed

A tangible result of both the cultural differences between the Allies and the generally secretive nature of British colonial officials became evident on Guadalcanal, when, after both Folster and Kaltenborn had broadcast their despatches from the island (Folster on both 6th and 11th November), the high-hand of British bureaucracy came down upon them. With a war still raging, the WPHC in Fiji had time to send a telegram marked 'secret' to the BSIP Resident Commissioner saying that the Colonial Office in London was reporting that British newspapers had mentioned a "Broadcast from Guadalcanal" (High Commissioner to Resident Commissioner, November 20, 1943). The BBC was keen to know whether the Americans had installed any broadcasting equipment or whether the report is "loose newspaper talk" (High Commissioner to Resident Commissioner, November 20, 1943).

The Resident Commissioner knew nothing about the transmissions and asked the US Army Island Command G-2 (Intelligence) officer if he had any information. G-2 did not even know if the broadcasts had been made from Guadalcanal, let alone made at all, so wrote to his superiors in Noumea, New Caledonia to see if they were aware of it. If a transmission by Folster or Kaltenborn had been made, "permission for the broadcast had not been given by the Chief Censor" (Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, December 4, 1943), advised G-2. The Resident Commissioner also spoke with the Naval Liaison Officer (NLO) and was erroneously told that there were, previously unknown to him, two large US military radio stations (Z6K and GK4) on Guadalcanal capable of sending signals to both the USA and UK. A telegram to the UK from the Resident Commissioner with this information was not enough for the BBC, which asked whether these stations were 'secret' operations and on what frequencies they broadcast.

The CWO, Captain Robert Taylor, was handed the task of sorting out the whole matter and was able, by mid-January, to come up with some information in a memo to the Resident Commissioner. He had met a Lt. Hartman of the US military who confirmed that the Folster and Kaltenborn broadcasts had been relayed to the USA through the AACS (i.e. air traffic control radio) at Henderson Field. Later, he talked with a Lt. Anderson who was in charge of the AACS at Carney Field,[172] the upshot being that he was confused to learn that Z6K was actually a Noumea station, that NGK was the Navy Base Radio on

[172] Carney Field, also known as "Bomber2 [sic] Field" was at Koli Point on Guadalcanal, about six miles from Henderson Field.

Guadalcanal and that NGK4 was, in reality, station WYVM of the AACS. Anderson classified the stations as ‘confidential’ (secret) and reluctantly gave up the information that NGK4 operated on a shortwave frequency of 10140 kc/s.

The difference in the cultural context of information-sharing and the role of journalists came clear from the comments of the American officers to Taylor. “Lt. Hartman said he was unable to understand the request for the information,” wrote Taylor in his memo (Taylor, R., 1944). “He said if the BBC wished to avail itself of these broadcasts from these stations it could doubtless be arranged through the NBC of the USA” (Taylor, R., 1944). He also had no problems in allowing the facilities to be used for journalistic purposes. Lt. Anderson at the AACS, Carney Field gave Taylor similar views, stating that “so long as he [Anderson] was in charge of the detachment, any BBC or other British correspondent was at liberty to broadcast from NGK4, but in such case, relay would be through Australia” (Taylor, R., 1944).

In an attempt to end the entire matter, the WPHC sent a final telegram to the Secretary of State for Colonies in the UK detailing the situation and the “exhaustive enquiries” (High Commissioner to Secretary of State, February 24, 1944) which had been undertaken by the CWO. “These stations should be regarded as secret. I have not personally tried to get any more information”, wrote the High Commissioner, “as I do not wish to arouse suspicions unless the matter is considered important in London” (High Commissioner to Secretary of State, February 24, 1944). In an attempt to conclude the subject, he offered the suggestion that “If it [the matter] is important, I will ask Admiral Halsey if he can tell me the rest of the story” (High Commissioner to Secretary of State, February 24, 1944). The mention of Halsey’s name was enough for London to call a halt to the whole fruitless exercise.

The Empire strikes back

The sheer scale of the American social, cultural and political influence on wartime life in the British colonial Pacific was beginning to be felt as the US military, clearly the senior partner in the Allied presence in the region, acted very much in its own dominant interests when conditions dictated. Given the huge number of service personnel it had inserted into the BSIP, not to mention the massive logistical, equipment and armament support it had also provided, the Americans saw the few British officials still left in the Protectorate as being minor players in the game.

Politically, the Americans were visiting ‘guests’ on British colonial soil, although opinions had been expressed in other parts of the Pacific that the Americans might be interested in staying on after the war and usurping *Pax Britannica*. In the New Hebrides, there were even concerns that, in matters of sovereignty, the US military was already disregarding the British and French by simply making decisions themselves. The attitude of the US military towards the British in the BSIP was clearly evidenced in May, 1944 when the US Signal Corps Headquarters on Guadalcanal (Lt. Col. Raymond N. Lee) provided new radio frequencies to the Resident Commissioner in his own bailiwick. “Our assignment of frequencies for use by your people”, he wrote disdainfully, included 1925 kc/s for ship-to-shore voice communication, 12414 kc/s for reaching Suva and 6675 kc/s for the *Teleradio* network (Acting Chief Wireless Officer to Resident Commissioner July 16, 1944).

Of more long-term consequence in the BSIP was the extensive interaction between the US troops and the indigenous Solomon Islanders of the Labour Corps who served them in a supply and transportation role. The more egalitarian nature of the US soldiers, not to mention the relationship between African-Americans and whites as seen by the ‘natives’, brought about a growing view amongst the indigenous population that a realignment of the place of the European in a post-war BSIP would be in the offing, the ‘New World’ trespassers looking more congenial and prosperous than those from Britain.

With the realization that both influence and territorial possession were slipping away and into the hands of the Americans, the WPHC made small, but valiant, attempts to win back some kudos through exercises in ‘soft power’.[173] For example, in an effort to ensure that the Imperial voice could be more clearly and vigorously heard than simply through BBC broadcasts, it arranged for relays of the Suva commercial station in Fiji, ZJV,[174] to be transmitted on shortwave across the colonial territories through the facilities of the Fiji-based AWA Ltd. operated station VPD-2.

The tests were underway, morning, midday and evening, in November, 1943 on a frequency of 11.9 megacycles in the 25 metre shortwave band (High Commissioner to

[173] A concept coined by Joseph Nye of Harvard University in his books from the 1980s and 90s.
[174] ZJV was a mediumwave, private, commercial station of the Fiji Broadcasting Co, a subsidiary of AWA. Ltd.

Resident Commissioner, November 3, 1943). However, the authorities decided to 'de-commercialize' the transmissions by removing the advertising messages being broadcast by ZJV, thus creating short gaps in the programmes which made listening uncomfortable for those tuned to VPD-2. The priority accorded this whole operation can be assessed by the fact that the High Commissioner in Suva specifically asked the BSIP, and other territories, to report back on reception of the signals.

Papua pioneers 'communication for social change'

In neighbouring Papua, the Australian authorities moved far ahead of the BSIP when they increased their on-air presence by establishing a new station, 9PA in Port Moresby, to take the place of 4PM, which had closed, due to wartime security, in 1942. Station 9PA was jointly managed by officers from Australia (Captain Robin Wood of the ABC) and the USA (Captain Edgar T. Tidwell of the US Army). It was officially opened by the ABC General Manager, Lt. Col. Charles Moses, with addresses from both General Thomas Blamey, the Australian Army Commander-in-Chief, and the Australian Postmaster-General, on the 26th February, 1944 ("New Guinea Station Opened", March 4, 1944, p. 7).

By the latter part of the year, 9PA was also broadcasting programmes in the Motu language, the then Officer-in-Charge, Lt. Geoffrey Baskett, having a very progressive attitude to encouraging programming for indigenous people. Apart from news in Motu, read on-air by Captain W.R. Humphries ("Radio News in Motuan", April, 1944; "Broadcasts for Papuans: Good Work through 9PA", August, 1945), Baskett's special sessions, presented three times weekly, were, according to a *Newsweek* correspondent, "designed to help the natives think in terms of country rather than the limited terms of tribes and villages" (Papua Chats, December 4, 1944, p. 102).

Although Baskett and Humphries probably didn't know it, their prescient use of media as a tool in Papua's development, especially in seeking to establish a social framework for potential nationhood, anticipated the theoretical constructs on the same subject by many years. Apart from the three times weekly broadcasts in Motu in 1944, Baskett established listening groups, in which he personally involved himself, spoke with village groups about encouraging traditional music and folklore, and distributed radio sets widely to the local Papuans.

These concepts are those of the more modern academic discipline of 'communication for social change' in which the conveyors of information interact extensively with the message recipients to ensure local participation and thereby encourage change (see scholars such as Thomas, Chin, Van de Fliert, Obijiofor, Hammerlink, Servaes). Perhaps, too, Baskett was the intellectual equal of Lerner and McLuhan in surmising that the medium of radio really was a modernizing message in itself (McLuhan, 1964; Pool, 1990).

BSIP wireless scheme limps to an end

While the Australian colonialists in Papua were demonstrating how the programming content of radio broadcasting could be used as a positive tool for change, in the BSIP the wheels of bureaucracy ground forward inexorably. The much-vaunted Native Wireless Operators' scheme, which was designed to train WPHC indigenes to operate Government wireless stations and had been initiated in 1937, was producing its first BSIP graduates in 1944. Two Solomon Islanders assigned to the training programme in Suva in 1942 proved to enjoy mixed fortune. Simione Makini qualified at the end of February, 1944 and was then repatriated to the BSIP to commence as a Government Wireless Operator. Unfortunately, the other trainee, Jacob Letesasa, was diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis (TB) and confined to a long stay in hospital in Fiji (High Commissioner to Resident Commissioner, January 25, 1944).

The second training course was due to start at the Wireless School at Levuka, Fiji in the first quarter of 1944 with three Solomon Islanders, who had been continuing their education at the Queen Victoria School, enrolled as trainees. They were Silas Sitai, Hugo Gigini and David Sade.[175] Back in the BSIP, the CWO, Captain Robert Taylor, had advised the Resident Commissioner that the Protectorate needed six trained operators and that only one, Simione Makini, was available. Apart from the three shortly to be in training, Taylor recommended that two additional trainee operators be chosen. He had letters of application in hand from Mark Rusa and Alec Lianga, and felt that "both these lads appear to be of the type most likely to make a success [of the course]" (Chief Wireless Officer to Secretary to Government, February 2, 1944).

[175] Hugo Gigini, Silas Sitai (and Solomon Dakei) had been at Queen Victoria School earlier but had returned to the BSIP where they fought in the war under the command of Martin Clemens. At the end of 1942, they went back to school in Fiji (Horton, 1970).

At the same time, he specifically pointed out the merits of Sgt. William Bennett "who is at present operating with ability the *Teleradio* schedules here at Tenaru" (Chief Wireless Officer to Secretary to Government, February 2, 1944), Taylor noted that Bennett had the appropriate level of education, was keen, intelligent and had an "excellent war record" (Chief Wireless Officer to Secretary to Government, February 2, 1944). He had been instructing him in both Morse code and the fundamentals of wireless, had found him receptive and, therefore, recommended him for training in Suva. Bennett was accepted and joined the course which commenced in May, 1944 (Tutor, Wireless School, Levuka to Postmaster-General, Suva, May 27, 1944). The Wireless School Tutor, E.C. Higgins, was of the opinion that the BSIP trainees were below the necessary standard in mathematics and that their English language skills also needed attention. However, he optimistically concluded that "it is hoped that we shall eventually turn out a reasonably good batch of boys" (Tutor, Wireless School, Levuka to Postmaster-General, Suva, May 27, 1944).

One year later, Higgins noted in a progress report that the Solomon Islands trainees were progressing well, although a lack of education was still holding them back. Sade was rated best, with Gigini and Bennett not far behind. He felt that Bennett was full of self-confidence, intelligent "but a little verbose" (Tutor, Wireless School, Levuka to Postmaster-General, Suva, May 2, 1945). Silas Sitai had a terrible course mark of only 24% for the year, his Morse work also being rated as "very bad" (Tutor, Wireless School, Levuka to Postmaster-General, Suva, May 2, 1945). A frustrated Higgins lamented that Sitai "should be given no consideration whatsoever" (Tutor, Wireless School, Levuka to Postmaster-General, Suva, May 2, 1945), in terms of employment as a radio operator and he was repatriated to the BSIP. However, Higgins was just as dismissive of the skills of several of the other trainees, pointing out that some sort of entrance test should be given "before wasting time and money in a futile effort to teach scientific subjects to untrained minds" (Tutor, Wireless School, Levuka to Postmaster-General, Suva, May 2, 1945). Twelve months later (March, 1946) and the Wireless School had been closed down, a re-opening date unknown and unlikely. Gigini, Bennett and Sade were all sent home after their final examinations (High Commissioner to Acting Resident Commissioner, March 13, 1946).
The Native Wireless Operators' scheme was, for all intents and purposes, over.

AFRS comes to Guadalcanal

While the BSIP authorities were coming to grips with the whole notion of broadcasting, major developments had been underway in the USA to develop radio services for

American troops serving across the globe. In early 1942, the US Army, recognising the importance of the psychological welfare of its troops, established the Morale Division of the Army Service Command. Thomas H.A. Lewis, an advertising agency executive and husband of film star Loretta Young, was commissioned a Major and given the job of establishing an Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) (J. Harris, personal communication, 1983). Apart from beaming news and entertainment content by shortwave (as pioneered by Colonel Jack Harris), the AFRS also set out to establish locally-based American Expeditionary Stations (AES) in locations across the globe and wherever US forces were in action. The first AES station went to air in Casablanca in Morocco in March, 1943 (*Broadcasting*, December 29, 1943, p. 27).

Guadalcanal was, by late-1943, becoming a major US military staging area and rear base in the South Pacific Area (SPA). Clearly, such a location would be a prime candidate for an AES station. However, it was not the first of the South Pacific outlets to be developed, that honour going to New Caledonia. On 5 Sept. 1943 the Noumea station was formalized as a military entity under the control of the US Army's Information and Education (I&E) unit. It operated with one kilowatt of power on 975 kilocycles and later took the call-sign WVUS (DeLay, 1947).

In January, 1944 Major Purnell ('Mike') H. Gould became South Pacific Radio Officer of the AFRS with Lieutenant Bob LeMond as one of his assistants and Major Clifford A. Frink as Chief Radio Engineer (*Broadcasting* magazine, May 8, 1944). Based in Noumea, these officers brought together the core of the staff for the future stations in the Pacific and while they moved forward with their planning, personnel with backgrounds in the radio industry were being drafted for military service back in the USA.

Under AFRS Special Order Number 10, teams of AFRS graduates were dispersed to the South and South-West Pacific (F. K. Tourtellotte, personal communication, n.d.). The Guadalcanal radio team comprised Captain Spencer Allen, Station Manager, Captain Wilford Kennedy, Chief Engineer, and Staff Sergeant George Dvorak, Programme Director. Programme staff were Corporal Allen Botzer, T/5 Hymen Averback and Pfc. Richard Sinclair. The technical team was T/5 Rudolph Rubin, Pfc. Ivan Saddler, Pfc. Rudolph Luukinen and Pfc. Steve Johnson (S. Allen, personal communication, 1990).

The respective AFRS contingents carried with them, on board their ships, all the equipment they would need to establish fully-fledged radio stations at their future destinations. Luukinen itemized the AES Guadalcanal gear as an RCA one kilowatt transmitter, a Rosen studio console, a pair of RCA junior velocity microphones, turntables, a Presto disc-cutter and some shortwave radio receiving equipment (R. Luukinen, personal communication, 1990).

Captain Spencer Allen's group reached Guadalcanal on the 16th February, 1944, the American trade magazine, *Broadcasting*, patriotically heralding their arrival. 'The Guadalcanal station had its beginning when a crew, complete with equipment, was put ashore on a lonely stretch of South Pacific beach' trumpeted the report. 'Cpl. Allen Botzer had a .45 thrust into his hand and was told to guard the equipment. The rest of the men were dispatched on a scouting tour to determine what the next move would be' *(Broadcasting*, May 8, 1944).

Botzer didn't quite see things in the same way. In a letter home, he wrote that "Of course that business about the .45 isn't true. The rest of the stuff vaguely corresponds to the truth. What really happened," he told his family, "was that we sat around on our duffle bags waiting for transportation, very hot, very wondering what happens next. The only thing we had to avoid was having a coconut fall on our noggins" (A. Botzer, personal communication, 1944).

Mosquito Network **is born**

The AFRS staff members were creative, 'Hollywood types' with inventive minds. Their exotic Pacific location, combined with the ever-present dangers of malaria, set them thinking of a name for their new station. They called it *The Mosquito Network*. Credit for coining the name was attributed to the Programme Director, Staff Sergeant George Dvorak. "Probably I did [devise the name], I don't know", he modestly recalled some years later. "The big issue at the time was malaria and they had some fancy name for the radio station, which was American Expeditionary Forces, or Services, or whatever it was. And that was a little cumbersome. And it didn't give a personality. So, we just all decided, and probably I was the first one- I don't know- to call it *The Mosquito Network* and it caught on. Everybody liked it. They remembered it. So, we dropped all the rest of it." (G. Dvorak, personal communication, 1990)

The American Expeditionary Station on Guadalcanal was just one of a grouping of AFRS stations providing entertainment programmes and news from home for American service personnel posted to the Pacific battlefronts. Others in the chain were located at Munda, New Georgia (BSIP), Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville (New Guinea), Espiritu Santo (Anglo-French Condominium of New Hebrides), Noumea (New Caledonia) and Auckland (New Zealand). The stations were not a network in the sense that they shared programmes and news simultaneously. Rather, they were individual medium-wave stations of common parentage. Several instances are recorded of attempted relays of programmes when the AES stations tried to link with their sister stations. However, poor radio reception conditions made the attempts only partially successful. In late-1944, a brief four-station link-up, with AES Noumea as key station, was finally achieved (NY Times, December 17, 1944).

The Guadalcanal radio studio building was in the US military encampment about half a mile from Lunga beach and one mile from Henderson Field. Captain Spencer Allen was relieved to find, on arrival, that Army engineers and Signal Corpsmen had constructed a studio building, “the first made of clapboard in the camp”, he recalled, “and a smaller transmitter shack about 200 yards away” (S. Allen, personal communications, 1983-90). The base comprised tents, huts and storage facilities in an area still being used by the Levers firm as a commercial coconut plantation. “There was a major east-west road just south of us which we called Highway 50” (S. Allen, personal communications, 1983-90), Spencer Allen recalls. Coastwatcher Martin Clemens distinctly remembers AES Guadalcanal as announcing “It was between Fifth Avenue and unimproved ground” (M. Clemens, personal communication, 1982-1986).

Guadalcanal takes to the airwaves

Captain Allen was instructed that he had ten days to get the station on the air. An antenna was rigged between two coconut palms and an electricity source located (Rudolph Luukinen, personal communication, 1990), with test broadcasts underway on the 2nd March. AES Guadalcanal officially opened on a frequency of 720 kc/s with full programming on the 13th March at 05:30hrs (A. Botzer, personal communication, 1990).

On the 3rd April, 1944, the small existing Special Services Division station on New Georgia in the BSIP was absorbed into the AFRS realm as AES Munda and started transmissions under its new banner. AES Bougainville followed on the 15th April and AES

Espiritu Santo on the 4th August, 1944 (Various unofficial sources; A. Peterson, personal communication, 2014, A. T. Cushen, personal communication, 1984; R. Crawford, personal communication, 1985-2014; and AES personnel). A few months later, all AFRS stations were assigned standard US radio call-signs, with Guadalcanal becoming WVUQ, New Georgia WVTJ, Bougainville WVTI, Noumea WVUS and Espiritu Santo WVUR.

Each AES radio station received a basic library of recorded music from the USA. While this was not the back-bone of the station's programming, it was the key day-to-day material needed by the programme staff. The stations also relayed news broadcasts from US-based shortwave stations and, for the rest of the daily schedule, produced their own programming output. The studios were also open to other military forces, the New Zealand Army presenting a programme every Saturday at 12:00hrs for its Service Command Camp staff ("New Zealand Hour-The Mosquito Project", 1944). Visiting USO shows, featuring such famous Hollywood personalities of the time as Bob Hope, Francis Langford and Jack Benny, regularly visited and the stars were interviewed by the station. AES Guadalcanal was on-air from 05:30hrs to 08:05hrs, again from 11:00hrs to 13:00hrs and with evening sessions from 17:00hrs to close-down at 22:00hrs (AES Guadalcanal programme schedule, March, 1944, M. Hadlow).

AES programme staff, having commercial radio career backgrounds, were keen to use their advertising skills in broadcasting public service 'infotainment' messages to the troops. Hy Averback ran the daily *Atabrine Cocktail Hour*, a programme designed to remind the troops to take their anti-malarial tablets. To better hammer home his message, he invented make-believe locations and situations for his show. With Harry James' version of *The Flight of the Bumble Bee* as its musical theme (Kirby & Harris, 1948) and accompanied by background sound effects of a murmuring crowd, women's laughter and ice tumbling into cocktail glasses, Averback would say that his show was coming "From the Lizard Lounge in the exclusive Lunga Beach Club" (S. Allen, personal communications, 1983-1990),
or "From the fungus-festooned Fern Room, high atop the elegant Hotel DeGink[176] in downtown Guadalcanal" (H. Averback, personal communication, 1990).

[176] Each US base had a Hotel DeGink, essentially a tent or barracks for transient personnel between assignments.

Broadcasts of news in Pijin

By May, 1944 AES Guadalcanal was presenting major news bulletins seven times a day. The innovative and egalitarian American station programme staff were keen to also involve the indigenous Solomon Islanders, whom they saw every day in their camp, in some form of cultural exchange on the radio. To this end, Captain Spencer Allen sought to ensure that local music and languages were heard on the station. In recognition of both his Pijin language skills and affinity with indigenous Solomon Islanders, long-time BSIP resident[177] and medical practitioner, Dr. Eroni Leauli Taoi (Ministry of Health, Fiji; personal communication, June 20, 1985) from Fiji, was invited to the AES Guadalcanal studios where he would translate news scripts into Pijin, which he then presented on-air.

Captain Allen also visited one of the camps used by Levers plantation labourers, mainly recruited from the island of Malaita, and talked with their Australian overseer about having some choral groups record programmes. “We learned that there were two groups of natives who had nothing to do with each other because of their songs”, he recalled. “One sang only Anglican hymns- the other, non-secular songs such as ‘Humonderange’ [Home on the Range] and ‘Cummin round the montan’’’ (S. Allen, personal communications, 1983-1990).

The two groups visited the AES Guadalcanal studios and made recordings that were broadcast on the 12th April, 1944. “They sang only hymns”, Allen Botzer wrote home to his family, “and their ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ sounded something like ‘Moses Smote the Wheel’- but their harmony was strangely good. They didn’t seem afraid of a mike, or maybe they didn’t know it was there” (A. Botzer, personal communication, 1990).

During the studio sessions, Captain Allen tried to explain to the indigenous Solomon Islanders what radio was all about. The Australian overseer translated it into Pijin as “Music-him-fella-go-long-way-round-come-out-someplace-else” (A. Botzer, personal communication, 1990). In his diary, Spencer Allen noted the occasion. “Much laughter when they heard themselves on the loud-speakers. We gave them [the recordings] to play on their gramophone back in the camp. I don’t know if the natives were from Guadalcanal

[177] Dr. Eroni Leauli had worked extensively with Dick Horton in Tulagi in the 1930s and was with Martin Clemens in the hills of Guadalcanal during the coastwatching days of the 1940s.

or Malaita- maybe both. That might be the rivalry because of their song preferences" (Allen Botzer, personal communication, 1990).

AFRS stations close-down

With the war situation changing, staffing movements within *The Mosquito Network* began to gather speed as some stations closed and programme and technical staff were transferred to new theatres. The first *Mosquito Network* station to close was the AES in Auckland which was returned to the local NZBS authorities, staff being transferred, in January, 1945 to Noumea where they waited orders for their next assignments. Also in January, AES Bougainville left the air. By April, 1945 AES Munda on New Georgia had also closed down, with some of the staff being re-assigned to AFRS stations in the Philippines (A. Botzer, personal communication, 1990).

As AFRS crews left the American Expeditionary Stations, operations were often taken over by other units, such as the Army Air Force Communications System (AACS) or the US Signals Corps, and kept on the air under local auspices. By July, 1945, AES Noumea, AES Guadalcanal and AES Espiritu Santo were the only three AFRS stations still broadcasting using staff who had been with the original teams trained in Los Angeles. Elsewhere, the AACS kept some local radio stations on the air, with their own specialists handling programming and engineering duties.

The last man standing at AES Guadalcanal was Pfc. Richard Sinclair. On the orders of senior officers, he was told that the station would go off the air on the 30th November, 1945. On the final evening of transmission, Sinclair used portions of the recordings made by the station since it went to air in March, 1944 as a farewell. He wrote to Allen Botzer that he would "use a bit from George's [Dvorak] *Native News*, quite a hunk from your [Botzer] first anniversary show, and several other cuts we made" (Sinclair, 1945). At the conclusion of the transmission, Sinclair carried out the orders he had received concerning the disposal of the station's equipment. "The Signal Corps will box up our old transmitter for shipment to Japan. All the other stuff will go in the junk pile, I guess" (Sinclair, 1945).

After Sinclair's departure, the AACS, using its own transmission equipment, operated WVUQ into the following year. The last reported transmission of WVUQ Guadalcanal was in September, 1946. A listener in New Zealand heard the station on the 21st September on 690 kc/s. However, when a letter was sent to WVUQ later that month, it was returned

by the Post Office bearing the words “Unclaimed. Moved- no address” (*NZ DXTRA*, September, 1946). The American era of broadcasting in the BSIP was over.

SPECIAL SERVICE SPA DIGEST

Buy War BONDS

VOL. 1 NO. 5 APRIL 1944

NEW PROGRAM DISCUSSED

DEDICATE AES UNITS 709-717

"I congratulate the men who ha made possible this worthy venture and the men and women at home who give of their time and talents to provide you with this entertainment. Success to all of you." With these words Admiral William F. Halsey, Commander SPA, keynoted the dedicatory radio program which launched AES, 717.

Operated by an all-soldier staff of well known former commercial radio men, AES 717 officially opened its airlanes on April 3rd. Having as its sole concern the entertainment and education of the Armed For- c . this new addition to the 'Mosquito Network' brings to five the number of AES now serving the SPA. A widespread and varied program schedule is planned. The fullest use of

CONT'D ON PAGE 6

M S D DIRECTORS EYE FUTURE OF NEW BRANCH

The MS program was recently launched amidst an intensive discussion of Information, Education, Orientation, plans for YANK, the Army Weekly, and future radio stations in the SPA, by the group of experts pictured below. Major R.E.Carpenter, SSO, stated that definite plans and policies regarding this program would be decided upon after a survey of APO's were made by Major L.G.Shreve, MSO. The latter, a recent arrival in our area, has been engaged in Orientation and Information

Reading from L to R: Maj. R. G.Shreve, MSD; Maj. R. E.Carpenter, SSO; Maj.H. A.Snyder, Education Officer and Capt. J.J.Craemer, Officer — In-Charge YANK, Army Weekly.

work for the past 18 months at a replacement training center in the states and will assume his duties under the guidance of the Director, SS.

It is planned to assign MS personnel to each of the Sc's within the area, channeling down all existing materials and aids so that maximum, effective distribution can be obtained. In addition, other materials will be developed and distributed by the MS staff, now enroute to the SPA.

Capt.J.J.Craemer will be in charge of YANK; Major P. H. Gould will continue as Theatre

CONT'D ON PAGE 8

Figure 16: Announcement of AES Munda and Guadalcanal stations.

US Army announces the opening of new AES radio stations based at Munda (APO 717) and Guadalcanal (APO 709) in 1944. (APO is the Army Post Office locator for each base)

[Credit: National Archives]

Figure 17: AES Guadalcanal station (WVUQ) crew.

AES Guadalcanal station (WVUQ) crew in training at AFRS headquarters, Hollywood, Los Angeles (1944). (l to r back) Cpl. Allen Botzer, Pfc. Richard Sinclair, Pfc. Ivan Saddler, Pfc. Rudolf Luukinen, Cpl. Alfred Taylor. (l to r front) Staff Sgt. George Dvorak, T/5 Rudolph Rubin, T/5 Hy Averback, Captain Spencer Allen, Captain Wilford Kennedy.

[Credit: US Army/National Archives USA]

Figure 18: AES Guadalcanal building, Camp Lunga.

Main AES Guadalcanal building, Camp Lunga. Pfc.Richard Sinclair adjusts the Radio City sign. The name was an ironic reference to the RCA's Radio City Music Hall studios and theatre in New York. (1944)

[Credit: National Archives 80-G-233325]

Figure 19: Main studio of AES Guadalcanal station.

Main studio of AES Guadalcanal station (WVUQ) in Camp Lunga (near Henderson Field). (1944)

[Credit: US Army/Allen Botzer collection]

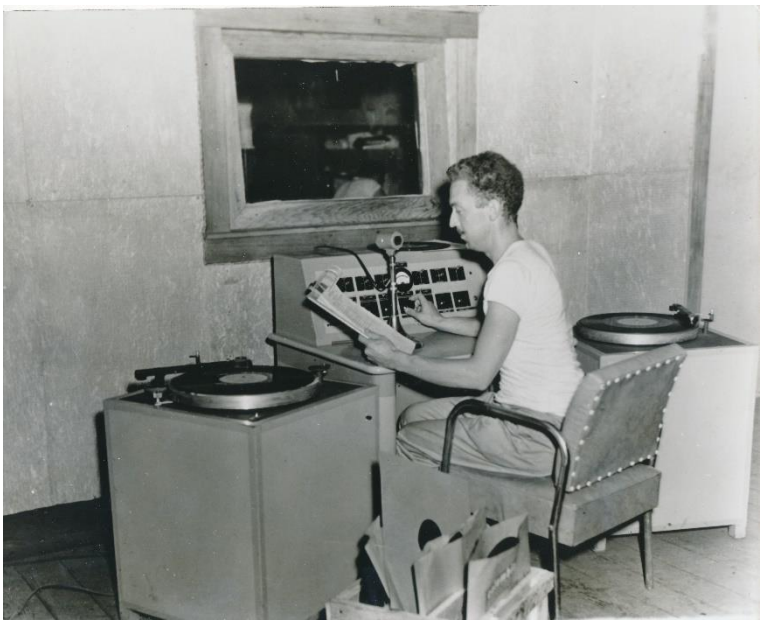


Figure 20: Announcing studio, AES Guadalcanal station.

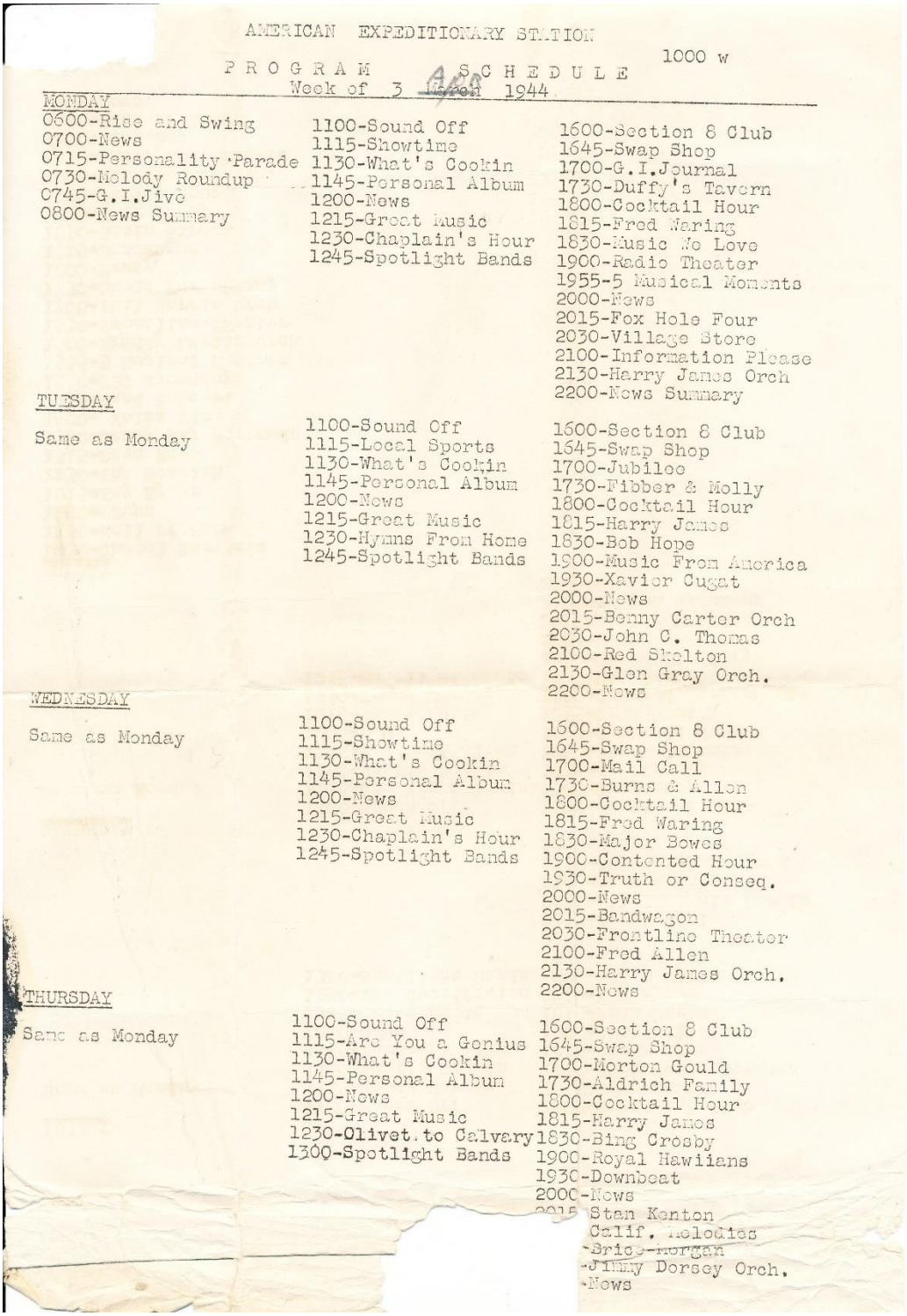
Announcing studio, AES Guadalcanal station (WVUQ). Cpl. Allen Botzer at the microphone. (1944)

[Credit: US Army/National Archives]

Figure 21: Church broadcast over AES Guadalcanal.

Religious 'live' broadcast from the Church at the military cemetery, Guadalcanal. Note the building is made of local materials. AES Guadalcanal engineer, Pfc. Rudolf Luukinen, operates the technical equipment. (1944)

[Credit: US Army/National Archives]



AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY STATION 1000 w

PROGRAM SCHEDULE
Week of 3 March 1944

MONDAY

0600-Rise and Swing
0700-News
0715-Personality Parade
0730-Melody Roundup
0745-G.I.Jive
0800-News Summary
1100-Sound Off
1115-Showtime
1130-What's Cookin
1145-Personal Album
1200-News
1215-Great Music
1230-Chaplain's Hour
1245-Spotlight Bands
1600-Section 8 Club
1645-Swap Shop
1700-G.I.Journal
1730-Duffy's Tavern
1800-Cocktail Hour
1815-Fred Waring
1830-Music We Love
1900-Radio Theater
1955-5 Musical Moments
2000-News
2015-Fox Hole Four
2030-Village Store
2100-Information Please
2130-Harry James Orch
2200-News Summary

TUESDAY

Same as Monday
1100-Sound Off
1115-Local Sports
1130-What's Cookin
1145-Personal Album
1200-News
1215-Great Music
1230-Hymns From Home
1245-Spotlight Bands
1600-Section 8 Club
1645-Swap Shop
1700-Jubilee
1730-Fibber & Molly
1800-Cocktail Hour
1815-Harry James
1830-Bob Hope
1900-Music From America
1930-Xavier Cugat
2000-News
2015-Benny Carter Orch
2030-John C. Thomas
2100-Red Skelton
2130-Glen Gray Orch.
2200-News

WEDNESDAY

Same as Monday
1100-Sound Off
1115-Showtime
1130-What's Cookin
1145-Personal Album
1200-News
1215-Great Music
1230-Chaplain's Hour
1245-Spotlight Bands
1600-Section 8 Club
1645-Swap Shop
1700-Mail Call
1730-Burns & Allen
1800-Cocktail Hour
1815-Fred Waring
1830-Major Bowes
1900-Contented Hour
1930-Truth or Conseq.
2000-News
2015-Bandwagon
2030-Frontline Theater
2100-Fred Allen
2130-Harry James Orch.
2200-News

THURSDAY

Same as Monday
1100-Sound Off
1115-Are You a Genius
1130-What's Cookin
1145-Personal Album
1200-News
1215-Great Music
1230-Olivet to Calvary
1300-Spotlight Bands
1600-Section 8 Club
1645-Swap Shop
1700-Morton Gould
1730-Aldrich Family
1800-Cocktail Hour
1815-Harry James
1830-Bing Crosby
1900-Royal Hawiians
1930-Downbeat
2000-News
Stan Kenton
Calif. Melodies
Jimmy Dorsey Orch.
News

Figure 22: Programming schedule.

Programming schedule of the AES Guadalcanal station for the month of April, 1944.

[Credit: Allen Botzer]

Figure 23: Solomon Islanders in AES Guadalcanal studios.

Members of the Solomon Islands Labour Corps recording songs (in Pijin) in the main studio, AES Guadalcanal. (1944)

[Credit: US Army/National Archives]

Figure 24: Hollywood stars visit AES, Guadalcanal.

Hollywood stars Bob Hope (r) and Jerry Colonna (centre), on a USO show tour to entertain the troops, are interviewed by Captain Spencer Allen (l) in the AES, Guadalcanal studios. (1944)

[Credit: US Army 161 Signal Corps Co. No. 44-5746]

Figure 25: AES Munda, New Georgia station.

The AES Munda, New Georgia station building (r) on the shores of the Roviana Lagoon.

[Credit: Spencer Allen]

Figure 26: 'String band' in AES Munda, New Georgia studios.

Solomon Islands 'string band' recording songs in the studios of the AES Munda, New Georgia station (WVTJ). At right is Bill Gina, later to present programmes on SIBS, Honiara.

[Credit: US Army Signal Corps]

HEADLINES AT HOME

A campaign is launched in Denver to raise $1-million for a hospital to honor the memory of Major Gen. Maurice B. Rose, who was killed in Germany..... Lily Pons, Met soprano, and her husband, Andre Kostalanetz, orchestra conductor, are back after a four-month USO tour of CBI and European theaters..... A postage stamp will be issued commemorating the San Francisco United Nation's conference.....William Russell, 29, one of the notorious "trolley car bandits" who terrorized northeast Philadelphia several years ago, was killed by police in a gun battle. He is one of 12 who fled in a daylight break from Eastern State penitentiary.

Stimson Aide Lauds Negro GI's

WASHINGTON-(ANS)-Truman K. Gibson, jr., Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson's civilian aide on Negro affairs, reported that Negro infantry replacements have proven their willingness for combat in Europe and are fighting as well as any other troops lacking battle experience.

In reviewing a tour he made to European and Mediterranean theaters, he said that Negroes are going to the front in platoons composed of volunteers from service force units. In many cases he said that transfers to combat duty have meant lower rank and pay for the men.

"They fight well," he said, "because they are trained well, and serve in the finest divisions on the fighting fronts."

Chaplin Retrial Reveals Spat With Joan Barry

HOLLYWOD, CAL.-(ANS)-Joan Barry and Charles Chaplin "had a spat" about Oona O'Neil, now the comedian's wife, the red-haired Miss Barry testified Tuesday in the retrial of her paternity suit.

Chaplin didn't appear in Tuesday's hearings, but the jury was read a transcript of his testimony in the first trial, which ended in a jury deadlock last January.

Miss Barry's attorney said that Chaplin "ran like a scared rabbit" from a process server, who found the comedian on his tennis court.

Relating the spat about the former Miss O'Neil, Miss Barry said that Chaplin once told her: "No one else matters."

AIR FARE

TONIGHT---Your table at the Supper Club will be waiting for you at 1745. Connie Boswell will join Perry Como as guest..... News comes in from San Francisco at 1800.....At 1815 Wallach gives out with the latest happenings in the world of sports on Sports Extra.....A ten minute musical interlude until 1830, when Jimmy Durante and Gary Moore take things over to give us Comedy Caravan..... For a half - hour session with the Thin Man, listen to Mystery Playhouse at 1900.....Ella Logan, back in Hollywood after five months in Italy, is the headliner on Bing Crosby's Music Hall. Eddie Heywood will be on hand too, to give his sensational version of Begin the Beguine. So for a bit of top music, it's Music Hall at 1930 .....2000 brings more News from San Francisco..... following the news the second in the series of "What's Your Problem" will be heard at 1815.....The 2030 time is given over to Dinah Shore and her Showtime. Music from some of the top shows will be heard.....The New York Philharmonic, under the direction of Leonard Bernstein, airs from 2100 to 2200. Music will be Mozart's Symphony No. 41 in C major, known as the "Jupiter" Symphony..... At 2200 we hear the final late News from State-side. .....Eddie Condon takes over the air waves at 2205 for another session with Tommy Dorsey, Earl "Father" Hines, Muggsy Spanier, and Lee Wiley. T. D. joins Jess Stacey, George Wettling and Sid Weiss for Body and Soul; "Father" Hines and Wettling do A Monday Date; and they all get together on September in the Rain. That's all.

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Nora Eddington To Divorce Flynn

HOLLYWOOD, CAL.-(ANS)-Nora Eddington said Tuesday she would sue for a divorce from Actor Errol Flynn.

"All the love I had for Errol is gone completely," she said. "What I want to do now is get a job and a divorce."

Flynn has never talked about his romance with the beauty who was selling cigarets at the courthouse when he was on trial for statutory rape.

Miss Eddington did not answer the question that has been bothering Hollywood for more than a year: "When and where were she and Flynn married?"

She said they were married, but Flynn did not admit that much.

Flynn has made no financial settlement yet, but she said that she wishes nothing for herself, "however, I feel that Errol should make adequate provision for our child."

Their daughter, Deirdre, was born last January in Mexico City.

Figure 27: The Island Times (Guadalcanal) newspaper.

The Island Times (Guadalcanal) daily newspaper of 13th April, 1945 showing the AES Guadalcanal programmes for the day.

[Credit: Allen Botzer]

Figure 28: AES, Guadalcanal station.

AES Guadalcanal Station Manager, Captain Spencer Allen, in his 'garden' outside his tent, Camp Lunga. (1944)

[Credit: Spencer Allen]

Figure 29: Solomon Islanders meet US troops.

Solomon Islanders observe African-American and white American troops at the main US military cemetery on Guadalcanal. The relatively egalitarian relationship between American troops (as observed by Solomon Islanders in comparison with their pre-war experiences with colonial officials) had post-war repercussions in influencing movements such as Maasina Rule. (1944)

[Credit: Spencer Allen]

CHAPTER XII:
ENTIRELY MY BRAINCHILD
(c. 1944-1947)

> The first Solomon Islands broadcasts used the *Teleradio* network and were entirely my brainchild when Secretary to Government. After the 'Marching Rule' arrest operation called 'Delouse' of August, 1947, it seemed to me important that some sort of public information service be instituted. (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984)
>
> David Trench,
> Secretary to Government, BSIP.[178]

British reclaim authority

As the American military presence wound down, more colonial civil servants began returning to the Protectorate to re-establish Government. They found much devastation from the major battles fought in the BSIP, but also considerable new infrastructure, due to the largesse of America's wartime economy. Airfields, dockyards, buildings, power plants and roads were now in evidence, where once there had been only jungle, dirt tracks and local villages. The huge logistical base at Lunga had spread along Guadalcanal's northern shores to Kukum (where a military hospital was established) and onwards to Point Cruz (where the explorer Mendaña had landed in the 1500s), one of the few potential anchorages on the coast.

The pre-war BSIP capital, Tulagi, was wrecked and the incoming British officials turned their minds to abandoning the site and basing a new administrative centre elsewhere. After much angst, they chose to leave the island lifestyle of Tulagi, "what a pretty place it used to be, but now the war has destroyed it all" (*Solomon Soldier's News,* 1945) and establish the Protectorate headquarters in US built Quonset huts and locally made leaf houses at

[178] Sir David Clive Crosbie Trench, GCMG, MC, DL. (b.1915-d.1988). A Cadet in the Colonial Service in BSIP and received a Military Cross for his activities in the Protectorate during World War II. Later, Secretary to Government and Resident Commissioner. Became Governor of Hong Kong. See also Moore (2013).

Honiara,[179] the area around Point Cruz on Guadalcanal. There, they had roads, proximity to airports (the Fighter Two airstrip was at Kukum, while Henderson Field could be accessed by bridge over the Lunga River), wharves (both at Kukum and Point Cruz) and a range of other basic facilities.

However, what was not apparent to the naked eye was the change in attitude and thinking of the BSIP's indigenous population. The war had changed everything. The entire war experience, especially for the Solomon Islands men who were part of the Labour Corps, had been both an eye-opening and a mind-expanding experience. They had seen most of the white men who had previously ruled their lives run away when Japanese soldiers arrived in 1942. Then, during the war, they had played critically important roles in transport, logistics, intelligence gathering and hand-to-hand fighting, for which many received medals from Britain and the USA. All over the Protectorate, whether at Munda, Lunga or Yandina, they had interacted with American military personnel, both white and African-American, and had observed how the relationship between those groups, while not being (in reality) equal, was certainly nowhere near the 'master and servant' life to which they had been subjected.

On the colonial side, changes had also been made. The old crop of pre-war BSIP residents, whether planters, traders, missionaries or Government officials, had left the Protectorate, many never to return. Others were killed in the war or had reached retirement age. The Rev. John Goldie, who had been away from the BSIP when war broke out and was refused permission to return during the war (despite a personal appeal to Admiral Halsey in 1944), (Goldie, J., 1944, March 29 [Letter to Admiral Halsey]) eventually came back to the BSIP, but his era was over and he left in the early 1950s. A new breed of expatriate technocrats was also on the way, the tenured colonial leaders being shunted off to the last bastions of the British Empire, only to watch the whole Imperial structure slowly disintegrate and, eventually, implode as Macmillan's "wind of change"[180] speech reverberated through the global community.

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[179] The choice of Honiara seemed shrouded in the usual Administration secrecy, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (May, 1945) questioning why it was a secret and even asking whether the name was Harira or Honiara.

[180] A de-colonisation speech made by Harold Macmillan, as Britain's Foreign Secretary, during a visit to South Africa in 1960.

Honiara becomes wireless HQ

In April, 1944 the CWO, Captain Robert Taylor, left for Australia, never to return. His role was taken by Lt. John Davies, who based himself at the VQJ radio station then located at Tenaru (east of Henderson Field).

The BSIP authorities were almost totally reliant on the US military for their technical requirements, this point becoming clear when Davies provided an inventory of the VQJ equipment as the station moved to the Point Cruz area (Honiara) in July. The BC 325 B Federal, one kilowatt transmitter was “on loan from the US Signal Corps” (Acting Chief Wireless Officer to Resident Commissioner July 16, 1944), soon to be replaced by a Collier & Beale transmitter “also on loan from the US Signals Corps” (Acting Chief Wireless Officer to Resident Commissioner July 16, 1944), while the standby transmitter was a TBW2 of the United States Navy.

The BSIP Administrative HQ camp was based around Honiara (the new BSIP capital), the wireless station being in a Quonset hut close to the beach.[181] Two of the Suva trained ‘native’ wireless operators, Simione Makini and William (Billy) Bennett, worked at the station and Bennett well remembered the Quonset “near the Canoe House” (W. Bennett, personal communication, 1980-1984), and the old American Hallicrafters transceiver in use (W. Bennett, personal communication, 1980-1984). Then Secretary to Government, David Trench, recalled that the radio set was “a hopelessly out-of-date contraption cadged off the Americans” (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984).

The 806th US Signal Company even built the special directive antenna (Davies Lt. J. to Major Hyne, July 20, 1944), a tall mast made of six-inch steel pipes which became a spectacle during thunderstorms as it attracted lightning strikes. “Once, at least, the lightning got down the lead-in wire, bounced off the [Morse] key the operator was using and went to ground on the other side of the hut” (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984), Trench remembered.

[181] It was in the location formerly containing the War Memorial (near the Police station) in what is now Mendaña Avenue, Honiara.

The antenna proved somewhat problematic, a senior US officer,[182] instructing the CWO that a warning light must be placed on the top. As an electric light was not possible, a "hurricane light [lantern]" (Secretary to Government to Lt. J. Davies August 17, 1944) could be used, although it was not explained how this might be fixed atop the mast. Lt. Davies also warned the Camp Commandment that high voltage ran through the aerial when transmitting was in progress and, as this was close to 1,500 volts, a nasty burn could occur if the aerial was touched. The other issue was that the feeder lines ran to the transmitter shed at only 10 feet above the main road, so loaded vehicles also had to be warned (Davies, Lt. J., to Camp Commandant August 16, 1944). Safety fences were soon erected around the facility.

Despite the problems with equipment, a most encouraging feature was in the offing as the BSIP Administration had started to think of local broadcasts in Pijin to complement the 'soft diplomacy' transmissions in the language then being made through shortwave signals from Suva. Lt. Davies had taken over two high-powered transmitters from the RNZAF and suggested that "we will be able to use one for broadcasting our own Pidgin [sic] News to the Districts if so desired" (Davies Lt. J. to Major Hyne, July 20, 1944). Further, a 'studio' would soon be completed and he also put forward the opinion that he might receive the BBC news via shortwave, have someone "transform it into Pidgin" (Davies, Lt. J. to Major Hyne, July 20, 1944), and then broadcast it on the *Teleradio* frequency of 6675 kc/s.

BSIP rejects Lease-Lend

As the US military developed plans to leave the BSIP, it made requests to get back its loaned equipment. Some could be purchased on a Lease-Lend[183] arrangement, but other items would have to be returned. In one instance, Lt. Davies had a visit from Lt. Schlegel of the Signals Corps in June asking for their power unit back "in a week's time" (Davies, Lt. J. to Secretary to Government, June, 1944). The Administration was especially worried about the 1,000 watt transmitter which it had been using as it was their only wireless link with both the Districts and the outside world. The US military suddenly sought its return too.

[182] Chief of Staff, V Island Command.
[183] Lease-Lend was a US system to provide, usually free of charge, equipment and *materiel* to Allies during World War II.

The BSIP Government urgently gained quotations from AWA Ltd. in Sydney for a new transmitter, but it would take months to be shipped to Honiara. The Resident Commissioner, O.C. Noel,[184] approached the US to retain the existing transmitter, but they responded that it was actually of New Zealand manufacture and still owned by the authorities there. After considerable wrangling, the New Zealand Government agreed that it was quite willing to transfer the equipment to the BSIP "and in the circumstances, no charge will be made" (Commissioner to Resident Commissioner, June 12, 1945).

At the same time, the US authorities were seeking to off-load major amounts of other equipment, along with buildings, as they began to leave the BSIP altogether. They offered it to both the Government and any interested commercial enterprises, often on a Lease-Lend basis. Despite the fact that the post-war BSIP Administration would need a great deal of infrastructure to run a successful colony in a new era, the WPHC in Fiji contacted the Resident Commissioner and expressed the view that if the US forces decided to simply offer the buildings free of charge when they departed the Protectorate, this would be regarded as a "well and good" (Secretary, WPHC to Resident Commissioner, BSIP., WPHC 9/II, File F.58/28/1) situation by the WPHC. However, if the BSIP had to purchase the structures, they would not take up the option, "except perhaps in the case of the hospital buildings at Honiara" (Secretary, WPHC to Resident Commissioner, BSIP., WPHC 9/II, File F.58/28/1).

Later, the Acting Resident Commissioner had a similar 'dog in the manger' attitude when he reported to the WPHC in Suva "Decision of [US] Army Command to sell whole of the camp [Camp Guadal] *en bloc* and they are calling for tenders. I do not want to tender" (US Surplus Heavy Military Equipment other than Buildings in BSIP. July, 1945). One can only surmise how much more rapidly the BSIP might have socially and politically advanced after the war if the British had purchased large amounts of equipment (to carry out civil construction works and provide employment opportunities) as well as buying the hundreds of Quonset huts and wooden buildings on offer.

Lacking a buyer, the Americans dumped large numbers of vehicles and considerable quantities of power plants and other useful equipment into the sea. Returning to the BSIP for the first time since the war ended, the Rev. John Metcalfe was shocked as his ship

[184] Colonel Owen Cyril Noel, BSIPDF (b.1898-d. 1953). BSIP Resident Commissioner, 1943-1950. See also Moore (2013).

docked to see that the “Lunga-Kukoom [sic] District is one vast camp in process of liquidation” (Descriptive newsletters, March, 1946). He looked on in amazement as “Valuable equipment and stores are being burnt and dumped and there were long lines of trucks, guns etc. awaiting disposal” (Descriptive newsletters, March, 1946). By comparison with the wealth of the US *materiel* being destroyed, he was equally surprised to see that “The Government Station at Honiara is a collection of leaf huts of very temporary appearance” (Descriptive newsletters, March, 1946).

‘Civil propaganda’ broadcasts envisaged

Wartime conditions waned and peace returned, the BSIP Administration turning its attention to governance issues. It made the decision to concentrate its resources by having only three District Offices, rather than the previous eight, at which Government officials would be permanently based. Instead, smaller Sub-District Offices would be established to cover the other parts of the Protectorate. The offices would all require *Teleradios* and Lt. Davies was invited to give his opinion on how best the wireless situation might be managed.

In an indication that the authorities were moving closer to developing some form of broadcasting, the Resident Commissioner told Davies in his note that “The use of this [*Teleradio*] network will not only be for official and private messages, but also for Pidgin, Religious, Entertainment and Civil Propaganda” (Resident Commissioner to Acting Chief Wireless Officer, June 5, 1945). It was assumed by the Resident Commissioner that the broadcasts would be carried out from Honiara, with all the *Teleradio* stations able to “‘listen-in’ simultaneously” (Resident Commissioner to Acting Chief Wireless Officer, June 5, 1945).

Lt. Davies noted, in a very optimistic response, that, given climatic conditions and general ‘wear and tear’, the operational life of a *Teleradio* was about five years, so new equipment should be purchased for each District Office. He was also upbeat on the subject of the training of Solomon Islanders as wireless operators. Unlike the Wireless School in Levuka, which had taken two years to produce one BSIP operator, Davies calculated that, under his instruction, “after six weeks to two months training, a native with a sufficiently good command of English could operate [a *Teleradio*] quite efficiently and also learn elementary maintenance to keep his set on the air” (District Radio Stations, June 11, 1945).

In terms of a transmitter for broadcasting purposes, he was similarly enthusiastic, recommending that something in the range of 250 watts of power would be sufficient. With such equipment, “broadcasts from HQ will be very successful, and gatherings of approx. fifty natives could listen in around the District receiver speaker” (District Radio Stations, June 11, 1945). Davies thoughtfully suggested that if a larger audience was desired, public address systems could be installed at each District Office.

Maasina Rule creates radio impetus

The end of the war saw the disbandment of the Solomon Islands Labour Corps, most of the men being returned to their home islands. The majority were from Malaita. Across the Protectorate, indigenous Solomon Islanders watched as the foreign soldiers who had brought both war and, in some cases, prosperity to their formerly isolated and remote villages and islands, left the BSIP to return to their own countries. Suddenly, the world had changed again and villagers were, once more, left alone, even the former British officials and District Officers hardly yet again in evidence.

Understandably, the experiences of being part of the war effort, meeting people from a different culture (primarily the USA), observing the enormous material wealth of the temporary visitors and seeing the interaction between white and African-American soldiers left its mark. “These white people here do things with black people! They are not like those government people before” (White et al., 1988, p. 224), remembered Jonathan Fifi’i. On Malaita, such attitudes added fuel to an emancipation movement variously known as Maasina Ruru, Maasina Rule, Marching Rule, Marching Rulu, Masinga Rule or Marching Loa. British colonial rule was contested and tax collection resisted, the omnipotence of the British authorities being severely dented.

Not surprisingly, the British were alarmed by the rise of what they assessed as being either an anti-colonial independence movement, or a deliberate destabilizing by foreigners. The BSIP Government wheeled out a strategy to shut-down Maasina Rule, the plan being given the contemptuous name, *Operation De-Louse*, as if the members of the movement were insects to be eradicated. The wireless radio broadcasts then being planned, such as ‘civil propaganda’ announcements, fitted perfectly into the overall strategy and proved to be the main impetus for the establishment of the new broadcasting system. The situation in 1947 was tense enough for the Australian Government to seek the presence of a warship, HMAS *Warramunga*, to visit Point Cruz on Guadalcanal to provide a ‘steadying

effect' as "Native trouble in the BSIP is likely to reach climax [sic] on September 1st when clash [sic] between opposing factions is threatened" (542 Nankervis to Burton, August 20, 1947).

Views on how and why Maasina Rule started are as diverse as the commentators who have written on the subject. "There was a touch of communism in [it]" (Fox, 1967, p. 63), said one. "The Americans and Australians put across a lot of foolish stuff about Trade Unions, A Living Wage, Democracy etc. and sowed the seeds of dissatisfaction in very good soil" (Descriptive newsletters, No. 10, 1947), was a more sanguine view. The Rev. Goldie couldn't resist expressing the opinion that "Many of us who know the native well, and some of the Government officials also, think that the dealing with these disaffected natives has been badly bungled" (Goldie, Rev. J. F. to Auckland, December 30, 1947).

An alternative local opinion was that "It was characterised (...) by the twin desires of having the Solomons ruled by a government that would be more responsive than the colonial one to the wishes of its people, and by an ideal of brotherliness that should link its people" (Alasia, 1989, p. 112). Eminent Solomon Islander, Francis Bugotu, said the movement was an example of a conflict of cultures, "non-recognition of our own against theirs" (Bugotu, 1968, p. 65).

One of the Maasina Rule leaders, Jonathan Fifi'i, said a lot of nonsense was talked about the movement, especially that it was a cargo cult (Fifi'i, 1989). He claimed that it was, instead, about a better life and that "We were talking about the things we had learned during the war, about power and dignity and human rights and justice" (Fifi'i, 1989, p. 72). Fifi'i was later sentenced to prison for his role in the movement. However, eventually he became a prominent local politician and, in the 1980s, a member of the Board of the SIBC.[185]

A secret summary of the situation by the BSIP Police Special Branch contended that, while American troops had probably not deliberately passed on anti-colonial sentiments, "indiscriminate talk by junior officers and other ranks caused a certain amount of discontent among the natives" (Holloway, 1965).

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[185] Jonathan Fifi'i (b.1921?-d.1989). Maasina Rule leader, politician. See also Moore (2013).

Cold War threat

It must also be recalled that the immediate post-war period saw a cooling of relations between previous wartime allies, the Soviet Union and the Western bloc. With the Soviets now occupying much of Eastern Europe and finding sympathetic pro-independence causes in the colonially dominated territories and states of the Third World, there was considerable concern internationally that the Leninist dream of global revolution was growing across the world.

The Cold War, as it became to be known, was a headache for colonial administrators, the Maasina Rule movement being seen, by some, as an example of a movement which could be hijacked by outside forces. On the wireless front, international shortwave broadcasting had simply moved from a World War II footing to a Cold War propaganda stance, with shortwave stations (Radio Moscow, Radio Peking, Voice of America, BBC, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Deutsche Welle etc.) using the airwaves to conduct their own "war of the black heavens" (Nelson, 1997).

To counter the influence of broadcasts from Communist countries, the British Government diverted £1m from the metropolitan aid budget to wage a more effective propaganda war against Communism (Bowden, Clayton, & Pereira, 2012, p. 40). Such was the paranoia of the time, in the BSIP the Resident Commissioner expressed his fears to the CWO that he believed a new type of domestic wireless receiver then being introduced throughout the colonies, the popular *Saucepan Special*, "for some reason or another, is more easily able to pick up Moscow Radio than other sets" (Resident Commissioner to Chief Wireless Officer, June 6, 1951). He was adamant that "we certainly do not want the natives in the outstations to have easy access to the nonsenses [sic] which emanate from the Kremlin" (Resident Commissioner to Chief Wireless Officer, June 6, 1951). The CWO was able to quell his irrationality about the *Saucepan Specials* with a technical argument explaining that the sets could access a wide range of stations and frequencies, not just Moscow.

Bureaucratic in-fighting

In late 1945, Ron Calvert,[186] a skilled wireless professional who went on to later manage the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service, arrived from Sydney to replace Lt. Davies as Senior Wireless Officer. Shortly thereafter, he visited the AFRS station WVUQ and made inquiries as to whether they might be willing to leave some of their equipment behind when they departed the Protectorate. “However, they packed up all their gear and took it back to the USA” (R. Calvert, personal communication, 1984), he lamented.

Calvert’s role was primarily to handle the BSIP’s wireless telegraphy/telephony and *Teleradio* communication activities, the public broadcasting side of his job being very much a side-line activity and one he conducted mostly in his spare-time. The whole issue of purchasing a proper broadcast transmitter from AWA Ltd. in Australia was investigated by the Administration, but bureaucratic differences between Honiara and the WPHC officials in Suva over the use of such a piece of equipment saw a raging paper-fight continue for months. The AWA transmitter was to cost £1,400.0s.0d., could be delivered in 16 weeks and the Acting Resident Commissioner, David Trench, had enthusiastically endorsed its purchase as it fitted with his proposal for the *Operation De-Louse* ‘civil propaganda’ broadcasts, the transmitter being capable of both mediumwave and shortwave broadcasting (Acting Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, January 9, 1946).

Trench’s bureaucratic nemesis in Suva was Mr. R.C. Farquhar, Engineer (Radio) of the Post and Telegraph Department, the agency advising the WPHC on wireless matters. Farquhar attempted to blind Trench with technical information and also put to him the view that the whole future of broadcasting in the Pacific was under review and that a central focus “would be more economical and satisfactory than island groups of the WPHC trying to run their own broadcast services” (Engineer (Radio) P&T Dept, Fiji to Postmaster-General, April 15, 1946). He also felt that some of Trench’s comments were misleading, which caused a seething series of letter exchanges, Trench claiming that “Mr. Farquhar seems to have consistently missed the point” (David Trench, Acting Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, April 22, 1946).

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[186] Ronald Farleigh Calvert (b.1914-d.1988). Instructor at the Marconi Radio School, Sydney. Radio Operator, RAAF (pre-war). Chief Wireless Officer in the BSIP from 1945. Broadcasting Officer (i.e. Manager) of the SIBS 1952-1965.

By mid-year, the official files carried a weary, hand-written note in red ink “Pl. ask Mr. Trench to discuss with Mr. Farquhar to see if they cannot come to some agreement” (Acting Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, June 21, 1946). In September, 1946 the BSIP Resident Commissioner, who had been on leave, entered the fray and closed the matter down in a confidential memo to the High Commissioner by agreeing with Trench and saying that his Administration was standardizing with AWA Ltd. equipment as this was BSIP policy.

BSIP public clamours for information

The end of the year 1946 saw even expatriate BSIP officials becoming agitated about the lack of public information available in the Protectorate. In the week before Christmas, the District Commissioner (Western) had had enough and cabled David Trench, then back in his role as Secretary to Government. Claiming that he spoke for private people who had contacted him in Gizo, the District Commissioner asked “Would it be possible to inaugurate essential service programme to be broadcast from VQJ at convenient hour each day to contain information re shipping movements, weather conditions, market prices etc.?” (Bentley, DC (Western) to Secretary to Government, December 19, 1946). As if to further make his point and to overcome any secrecy or censorship issues which might still be in the minds of the ‘controlling’ officialdom of the WPHC, he reminded Honiara that “This service is normally provided in other countries” (Bentley, DC (Western) to Secretary to Government, December 19, 1946).

His request was neatly filed and passed through the usual hands at BSIP HQ in Honiara. Surprisingly, quick file notations appeared on the telegram, as if the District Commissioner’s message might well have been expected or even, perhaps, solicited. The comments of senior Administration officials were all complimentary, one suggestion being that broadcasts should be daily, but “who should prepare the broadcasts to be available at set times each day?” (Bentley, DC (Western) to Secretary to Government, December 19, 1946). The Secretary to Government had two ideas. “An immediate solution would be to ask Mr. Markham[187] to do it and I am sure he would be interested, but once started we should have to continue it” (Bentley, DC (Western) to Secretary to Government, December 19, 1946). However, David Trench was clear in his intent. “In all, I think that Mr. W.

[187] Harold A. Markham, former planter whose pre-war property was destroyed in the war. See also Moore (2013).

Bennett i/c [in charge] the radio-telephone service could do the job and would be the best solution" (Bentley, DC (Western) to Secretary to Government, December 19, 1946).

The date was the 21st December, 1946 and William 'Billy' Bennett's broadcasting career was about to begin. As mentioned previously, Bennett, a Solomon Islander who had already been decorated with the Military Medal for his wartime service, was to go on to become the best known voice on the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBS) and was the inaugural Chairman of the Board of the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) when it was established in the 1970s. He was awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for his services to the development of radio broadcasting in the country.

Now that a decision had been made to establish some sort of official information-sharing via the Government *Teleradio* network, discussions were put in place to flesh out the proposal, one suggestion being that the programme would be broadcast every day at 2pm. However, the pace of decision-making moved slowly and many minds had to consider the idea before it came to fruition. It seems that the pre-war experiences in using the same inter-island radio system to convey exactly the same kind of public information had long been forgotten. The wheel was to be re-invented.

Shoestring Network **finally goes to air**

Although the Resident Commissioner, O.C. Noel, had used the radio network on the 31st August, 1947 for an occasional anti-Maasina Rule announcement (Laracy, 1983), it was not until the 18th October, 1947, a full 10 months after the decision had been made to activate the plan, that the first scheduled broadcast of the experimental service from VQJ2, Honiara took place. It was 15.30hrs on a Saturday afternoon when Trench's *Operation De-Louse* communication exercise was finally to be put to the test. Given the small-scale of the whole operation and in keeping with historical precedence (i.e. the AFRS *Mosquito Network*), Ron Calvert called it *The Shoestring Network* (R. Calvert, personal communication, May 14, 1984).

David Trench himself took full credit for the whole strategy, noting that the broadcasts "were entirely my brainchild" (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984) and, following the arrests of all those involved with Maasina Rule, were designed to open

the information space as a kind of public sphere (Habermas, 1991). No doubt 'soft diplomacy' and reconciliation might also have been in mind. The proposal was forward-thinking in its intentions, although the impact of radio used as a one-way tool was bound to have its limitations and cut across the later thoughts of American communication theorist, Wilbur Schramm, who called such actions "The 'bullet point' theory of communication [whereby] a propagandist could shoot the magic bullet of communication into a viewer or listener, just as an electric circuit could deliver electrons to a filament and make the bulb light up" (Schramm, 1973, p. 126).

Using wireless to quell dissent was not a new idea in the British Empire, it already having been trialled in Nyasaland in Africa to quell a local uprising. "The natives got their first introduction to radio when the British forces penetrated their territory recently with motor lorries fitted with wireless installations" ("A Radio Set Squelches a Native Uprising", 1922, p. 294), said a report of the time. "So terrified were the superstitious blacks with 'the machine that could speak without mouth and hear without ears' that they assumed that the god of the ether could listen in upon their secret whisperings. So they promptly behaved themselves accordingly" ("A Radio Set Squelches a Native Uprising", 1922, p. 294).

David Trench's views were, of course, much more enlightened and his plans more sophisticated than the nonsense of the Nyasaland experience. However, as the first BSIP broadcast came after the Maasina Rule arrests, it seems to have been a matter of 'too little, too late' and it is open to conjecture as to whether a Government-run broadcast service established before the emancipation movement gathered pace might have been a more useful public enterprise.

Come what may, in 1947 Trench was writing a radio station funding proposal for the newly instituted Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CD&W) programme, but "as it was likely to be a long time before either the money or, indeed, the station, materialised, something was needed in the meantime" (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984). He enrolled Katharine (Kay) Poole,[188] one of the expatriate secretaries then working in the Resident Commissioner's office, to be part of the small broadcasting team as she had "a high clear voice which seemed likely to come over well on transmission" (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984). An additional speaker was Kay's

[188] Later to become BSIP's Public Relations Officer (until retirement in 1966) and a key person, with Ron Calvert, in the establishment of the SIBS.

friend, Mrs. F. Cromwell Moore,[189] a former journalist (Miss Rosa Burden) from Australia ("They Conduct Islands Radio News Service", April 2, 1948, p. 11).

At the outset of the service, Trench collated and wrote the items of news and "anything I could think of, of interest. Kay read them and Billy Bennett and Ron Calvert did the transmission side. She (Kay) quite soon did the editorial side too with only minor assistance from me" (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984). Trench recognised that it was "all extremely amateur and could be no more than a very partial success" (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984). However, it reinforced in his mind that a better system of broadcasting, as envisaged in the CD&W funding proposal he was writing, was necessary. (This latter project eventually came to fruition and was the foundation upon which the SIBS was established in 1952.)

'Good gathering round Brown and White'

To ensure a solid listenership for the first *Teleradio* broadcast in 1947, the Secretary to Government circulated information to 50 people across the Protectorate in the week leading up to the event. He advised the time and date of the transmission on 6675 k/cs in the 44 metre band and also requested feedback and material suitable for broadcast in future sessions. "Any suggestions for improvement would also be welcomed" (Public notice, October 15, 1947) he wrote, while he also sought comments on broadcast reception quality. Specifically aiming at the expatriate population, he pointed out that "it would be appreciated if residents could grant whatever facilities are possible to enable Solomon Islanders to listen to the broadcasts" (Public notice, October 14, 1947).

Soon after the first transmission, telegrams and letters began to flow into BSIP HQ in Honiara. "News broadcast today splendid innovation. Excellent reception. Good gathering round Brown and White. Time of broadcast seems well chosen. Wishing continued success" (Onepusu to Major Trench, October 19, 1947, Telegram) wrote the District Office personnel at Onepusu on Malaita. From the Rev. Goldie in Munda: "Interesting broadcast come [sic] over very well indeed was listened to by crowd of natives" ("Radio-Telegram", October 21, 1947). However, Colin Allan,[190] the District Commissioner (Western), while welcoming the broadcast, had reservations. "Universal complaint from all Native listeners

[189] Wife of Captain F. Cromwell Moore, Superintendent of Police and Prisons, BSIP.
[190] Sir Colin Hamilton Allan KCMG (b.1921-d.1993). District Commissioner, colonial administrator, scholar and author. Later Governor of the BSIP (1976-1978).

is that 3.30 on Saturday afternoon is not a headline hour as far as they are concerned. Saturday p.m. is sacred to hunting, shooting and fishing" (Telegram, October 22, 1947).

It was, of course, impossible to please everyone in terms of the programme's timing. The Director of Education sent Trench a thoughtful letter in advance of the broadcast in which he felt that Saturday afternoon was not a good time, but that 8.45pm might be better. He designated this time as it came in the middle of the 'Social Hour' (8pm-9pm), which all boarding schools followed and he believed that the broadcast would help the Solomon Islands students "to get the wider mental outlook which a regular news bulletin would engender" (Director of Education to Secretary D & N.A., October 17, 1947).

David Trench and his team carefully analysed the fifteen letters they received after several broadcasts (Response to broadcast, October, 1947). Too much Honiara news was one complaint, although some expatriates liked to know what was happening in the capital before they arrived for a visit. "The answer seems to be more news, not less Honiara" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947), was the view of the team. Two listeners complained about an inaccuracy in the shipping news, but this was a difficult matter to resolve as the information was correct at the time of broadcast and any late changes to the movements of ships were often unknown to Honiara. "Too much native football – this comes from the same people who object furiously to prefix 'Mr.' for local clerks" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947), wrote Trench in his analysis. "It used to take 1 minute and certainly was dull for us. Can easily drop it, but it was done as a tenuous link between us and the Native Sporting World" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947), wrote the broadcasters.

By the latter part of 1947, the broadcasts had moved from Saturday afternoon to Sunday morning at 10:30hrs. Not surprisingly, some churches felt this was not suitable, Norman Deck, a long-standing resident and missionary of the SSEC, writing to Honiara to explain that "we usually have religious services from 10am to 12.15 of one kind or another" (Norman Deck to the Director of Broadcasting, December 28 1947). However, as it was impossible to please all listeners, the weekly broadcast remained at 10:30hrs on a Sunday.

Radio's potential recognised

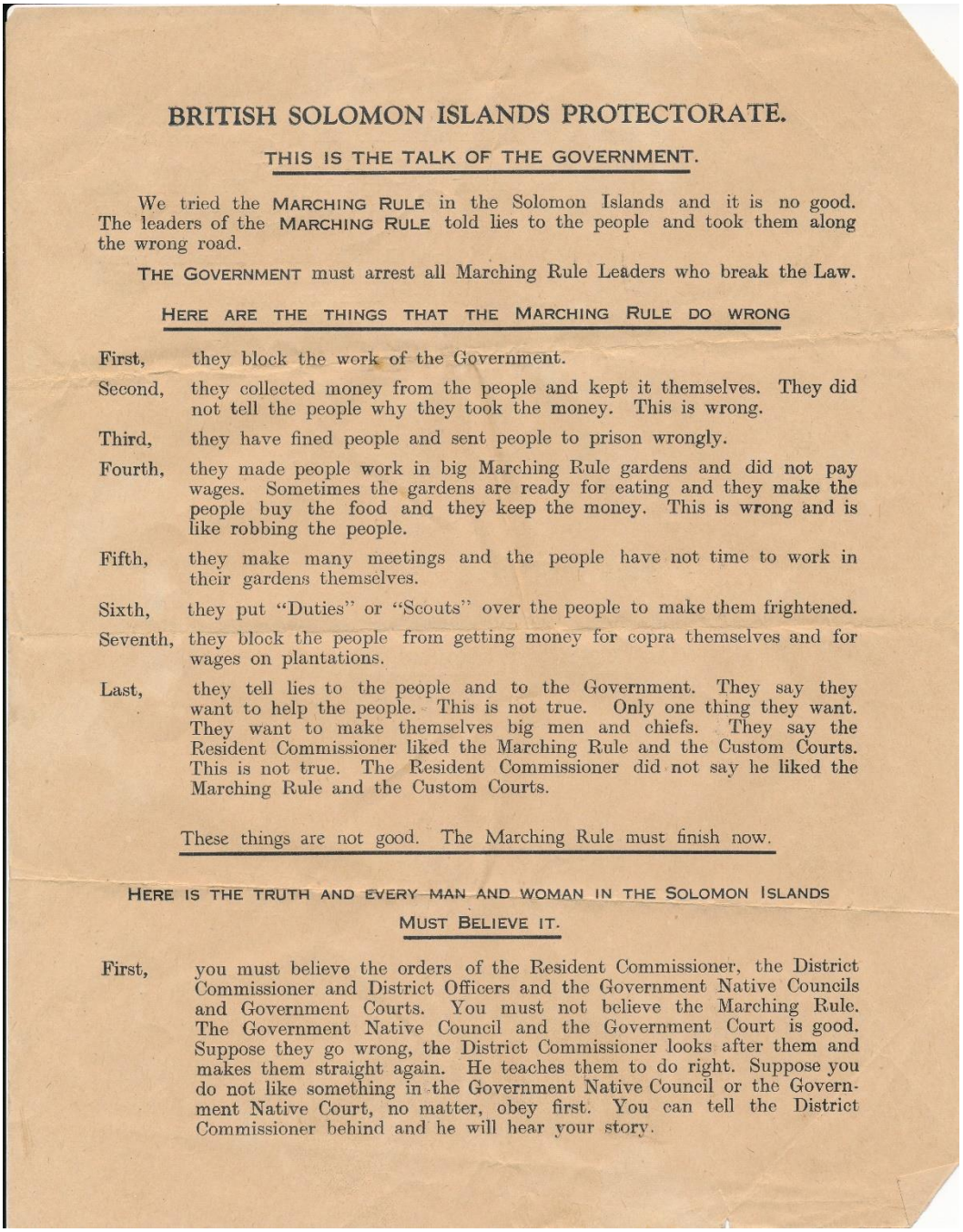
As the broadcast of material to local people was the original premise of the intended *Operation De-Louse* 'civil propaganda' campaign, it was not surprising that a monthly, fifteen-minute session 'for natives' was part of Trench's long-range broadcast plans. He didn't think that, in the early days, the weekly transmission had enough listeners to warrant a session, especially as the studio facilities were unavailable to play music into the programmes and "I would submit that we need music as well as talk before we can start a fashion for listening" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947). A lack of community radio receivers was another problem.

In terms of local information programmes "we could try [Bill] Gina out on the monthly news broadcast under supervision, feeding him with news. Siapu is a better announcer and I would very much like to try him too" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947), thought Trench. Generally speaking, news items were hard to gather, whether from local or expatriate residents. When asked, the expatriates all said that "nothing ever happens" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947), he wrote in his notes, so a plan was instituted to have District Officers all send telegrams to Honiara every fortnight with news from their areas. On a more promising note, a proposal to broadcast a bulletin of world news was actively pursued. In terms of logistics, it was considered that all that would be needed to transcribe material would be "a reliable set and a good deal of listening to get a comprehensive weekly summary" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947) for broadcast.

More local culture and folklore was another idea proposed by the broadcasters. "We could use all we can get, but, except for Gina, all we have had has been neatly cooked up from somebody's book or books, garnished with a few new stories or ideas" (Response to broadcast, October, 1947). Trench had also asked everyone he knew to submit talks scripts and now intended to also encourage such input by distributing another circular to a wider audience.

Despite the difficulties faced by the small broadcasting team of Trench, Poole, Bennett and Calvert, by the end of 1947 the weekly Sunday broadcast had become a feature across the BSIP. It continued in this form until 1952 when a more formal structure, the SIBS, was initiated. However, *The Shoestring Network* had shown the way and there was now no

turning back, broadcasting in the BSIP being a tangible part of social and cultural life, its future development assured.



BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS PROTECTORATE.

THIS IS THE TALK OF THE GOVERNMENT.

We tried the MARCHING RULE in the Solomon Islands and it is no good. The leaders of the MARCHING RULE told lies to the people and took them along the wrong road.

THE GOVERNMENT must arrest all Marching Rule Leaders who break the Law.

HERE ARE THE THINGS THAT THE MARCHING RULE DO WRONG

First, they block the work of the Government.

Second, they collected money from the people and kept it themselves. They did not tell the people why they took the money. This is wrong.

Third, they have fined people and sent people to prison wrongly.

Fourth, they made people work in big Marching Rule gardens and did not pay wages. Sometimes the gardens are ready for eating and they make the people buy the food and they keep the money. This is wrong and is like robbing the people.

Fifth, they make many meetings and the people have not time to work in their gardens themselves.

Sixth, they put "Duties" or "Scouts" over the people to make them frightened.

Seventh, they block the people from getting money for copra themselves and for wages on plantations.

Last, they tell lies to the people and to the Government. They say they want to help the people. This is not true. Only one thing they want. They want to make themselves big men and chiefs. They say the Resident Commissioner liked the Marching Rule and the Custom Courts. This is not true. The Resident Commissioner did not say he liked the Marching Rule and the Custom Courts.

These things are not good. The Marching Rule must finish now.

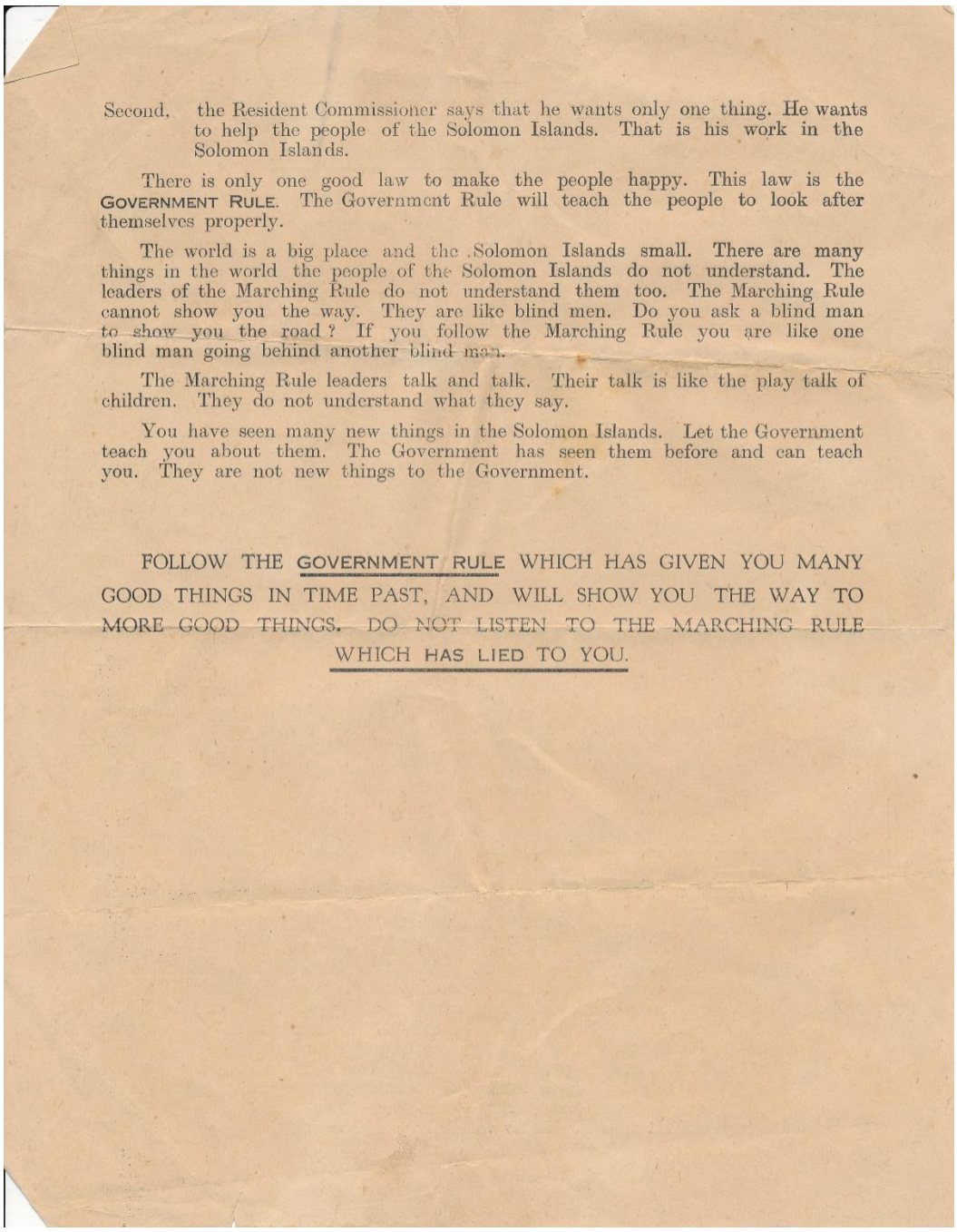
HERE IS THE TRUTH AND EVERY MAN AND WOMAN IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS MUST BELIEVE IT.

First, you must believe the orders of the Resident Commissioner, the District Commissioner and District Officers and the Government Native Councils and Government Courts. You must not believe the Marching Rule. The Government Native Council and the Government Court is good. Suppose they go wrong, the District Commissioner looks after them and makes them straight again. He teaches them to do right. Suppose you do not like something in the Government Native Council or the Government Native Court, no matter, obey first. You can tell the District Commissioner behind and he will hear your story.

Figure 30: Operation De-Louse propaganda.

Government 'Civil propaganda' used in Operation De-Louse.

[Credit: Calvert family collection]



Second, the Resident Commissioner says that he wants only one thing. He wants to help the people of the Solomon Islands. That is his work in the Solomon Islands.

There is only one good law to make the people happy. This law is the GOVERNMENT RULE. The Government Rule will teach the people to look after themselves properly.

The world is a big place and the Solomon Islands small. There are many things in the world the people of the Solomon Islands do not understand. The leaders of the Marching Rule do not understand them too. The Marching Rule cannot show you the way. They are like blind men. Do you ask a blind man to show you the road? If you follow the Marching Rule you are like one blind man going behind another blind man.

The Marching Rule leaders talk and talk. Their talk is like the play talk of children. They do not understand what they say.

You have seen many new things in the Solomon Islands. Let the Government teach you about them. The Government has seen them before and can teach you. They are not new things to the Government.

FOLLOW THE GOVERNMENT RULE WHICH HAS GIVEN YOU MANY GOOD THINGS IN TIME PAST, AND WILL SHOW YOU THE WAY TO MORE GOOD THINGS. DO NOT LISTEN TO THE MARCHING RULE WHICH HAS LIED TO YOU.

Figure 30A: Operation De-Louse propaganda.

Government 'Civil propaganda' used in Operation De-Louse.

[Credit: Calvert family collection]

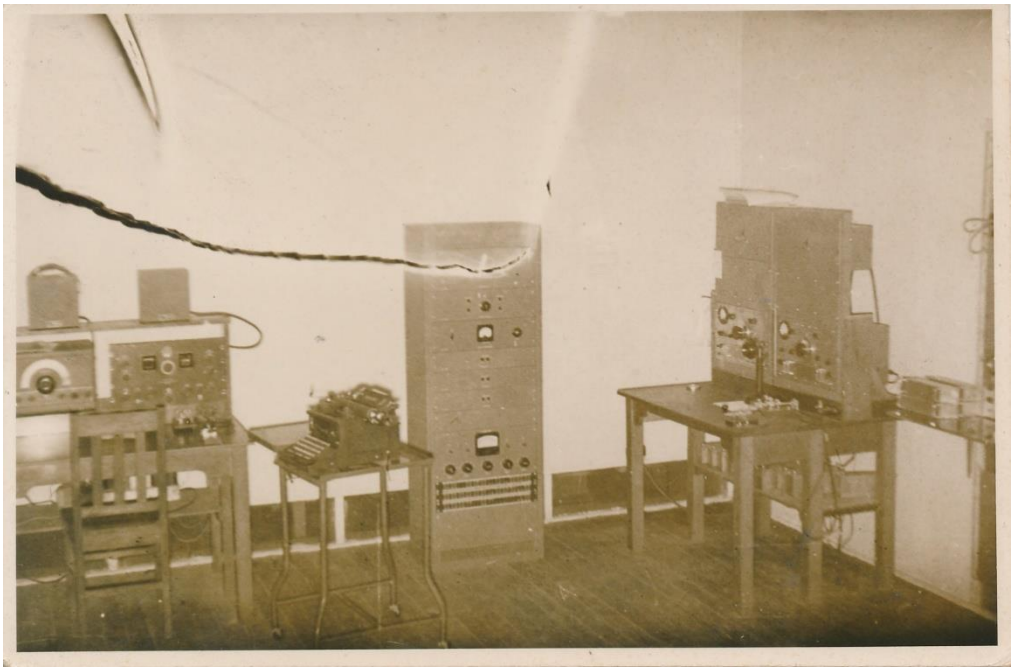


Figure 31: Post-war BSIP radio equipment.

Post-war BSIP radio equipment.

[Credit: Calvert family collection]

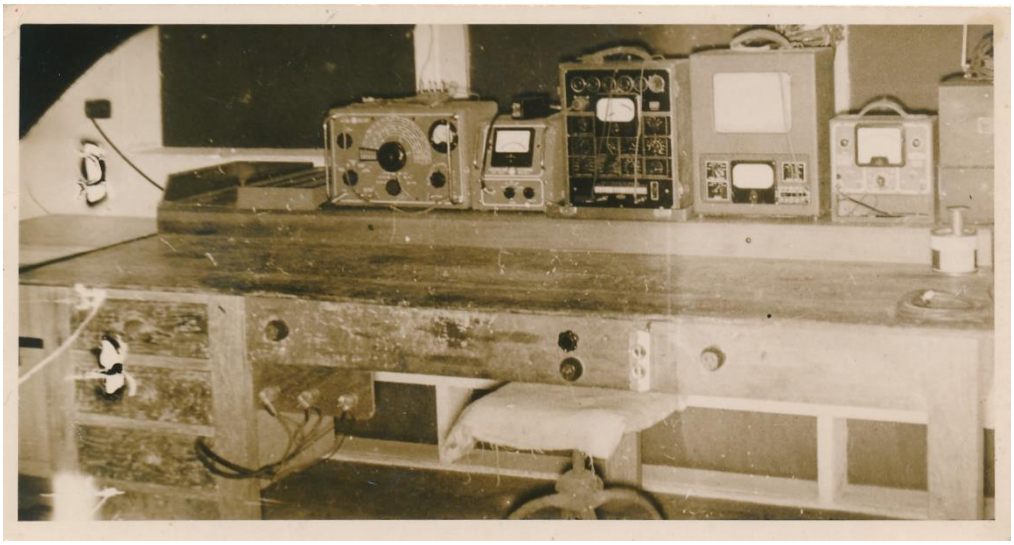


Figure 31A: Post-war BSIP radio equipment.

Post-war BSIP radio equipment.

[Credit: Calvert family collection]

Figure 32: 'String band' recording in Honiara.

'String band' recording for broadcast, Honiara. Broadcast Officer, William (Billy) Bennett (l).

[Credit: Calvert family collection]

CHAPTER XIII:
CLOSING TRANSMISSION

> I am firmly of the opinion that commercial companies should not be encouraged to undertake broadcasting or rediffusion services in the Colonies. Such an expedient should be considered only as a last resort if it has been clearly established first, that there is a definite need for setting up a broadcasting service, and secondly that there is no practicable way of financing it as a public service. (Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, to High Commissioner, BSIP. May 14, 1948)
>
> Confidential circular

Mixed signals

The failure of the British authorities in the Pacific to recognise and grasp the possibilities afforded by the new wireless technologies forms the basis of this thesis. By the 1920s, it was becoming clear across the globe that wireless, a miracle invention of the age, brought huge possibilities for communication, commerce, travel and trade. Even while amateur radio enthusiasts within the WPHC territories sought to demonstrate the technology and its possibilities to colonial administrators, those in authority often took to looking the other way and ignoring its potential. Far from being a policy imposed by London, the reasoning was often as simple as a dislike by some bureaucrats in the Pacific island territories of having their pleasant lifestyles disrupted by messages received quickly from headquarters by radio, rather than by letters, which arrived at a more genteel pace when the mail ship made its regular six weekly voyage.

The 1936 Plymouth Report (Windsor-Olive, 1937) on broadcasting services in the Colonies had opened the possibility for the establishment of radio where it was deemed necessary and where funding might be available. It even debated the possibilities of commercial advertising becoming part of the broadcasting mix and also included a ‘development communication’ message in that it proposed that broadcasting could convey information and education on health and agricultural issues in the Colonies (Windsor-Olive, 1937). However, the report was adamant that broadcasting must remain under the control of individual colonial authorities and the Earl of Plymouth’s idea that commercial

advertising was a possibility, was seemingly almost ruled out by the subsequent Creech Jones circular of 1948 (Newton, 2011; Potter, 2012; Windsor-Olive, 1937).

The mixed signals coming from London on commercial broadcasting had an ideological bias, the 1936 Plymouth Report being completed under Baldwin's National (Coalition) government and the 1948 circular coming from a Labour Party-led administration. Interestingly, it was probable that, due to a bureaucratic hitch, a copy of the 1936 report might never have even reached the WPHC in Fiji, the words 'Not received' having been hand-written alongside reference to that 1936 document on the WPHC copy of the 1948 circular. Thus, the BSIP may have been 'flying blind' for over a decade and making its own course without any specific guidance from London in future broadcasting developments.

Missed opportunities

A vulnerable BSIP, in the faraway reaches of the South-West Pacific, was always at the mercy of larger political powers, whether Australia, America or Great Britain. Perhaps the name 'Protectorate' did, in reality, give some protection to its people in a relatively benign colonial environment. However, the BSIP's history from colonial intervention in 1893 to independence in 1978 is also one of dramatic disturbance to a traditional way of life and the disruption of cultural mores, values and structures. Religion, economic exploitation, colonial administration and war have been just some of the precursors.

It is also a history of missed opportunities, brought about by a rigid adherence of the colonial administrators to the global bureaucracy of the Colonial Office in London. The sheer weight of administrative paperwork involved in governing vast and disparate regions, not to mention a clerical staffing structure which reported upwards for almost every decision, provided a stultified career environment in which it was difficult for even well-meaning individuals to achieve greatness. There were many who saw what was needed and attempted to redress situations in a meaningful and compassionate manner, but 'the system' was omnipotent.

While recognising that the pace of progress within a small and geographically diverse territory, such as the BSIP, would not have been on the scale of Pacific societies where larger urban centres and, thus, more funding were evident, it is difficult to understand the reluctance of some officials to appreciate the value of new technologies. Both Fiji and Papua enjoyed pre-war radio stations which provided an important local news, information

and educational service. Even after the American military (1944-46) had displayed to the authorities in the BSIP the way in which radio broadcasting could convey messages and give voice to the languages and music of indigenous people, few in officialdom could appreciate the beneficial possibilities of such a service.

Next steps

The initial information programme carried across the inter-island radio network in the BSIP during the immediate pre-war period of the 1930s was a very late start in the provision of some form of messaging, albeit top-down, by the authorities. However, as requests for shipping news, copra prices and other items of commercial interest had been sought from *Tulagi Radio* by traders and planters as early as the first decade of the 1900s, it was a service which came rather late in the day. After the 1930s experiments, it was not until 1947 that the Government even attempted another such broadcast and then only once a week for the next five years. Even by the standards of 'Pacific time', which has its own dimensions and parameters, this decade-long hiatus (despite an intervening war) could be seen as a decision in the slow lane.

It is not possible to accurately assess in this thesis whether radio broadcasting, if introduced earlier by the BSIP authorities, would have had a positive effect in better providing cross-cultural understanding, societal stability and the encouragement of a national identity amongst Solomon Islanders. However, the possibilities of 'development communication' programming in supporting education and encouraging the participation of communities in their own defined areas of need, have been amply demonstrated in many parts of the world and should have been considered worthy of exploration in the BSIP. Even the Plymouth Report of 1936 sought to lead colonial governments in that direction by suggesting health and agriculture broadcasts, while countless theorists have researched the topic of media and its relationship to society, pointing to it being an active modernizer and partner in the development cycle (Schramm, 1973; Pool, 1990; Thomas, 2010; Obijiofor, 2015).

From a tardy start, broadcasting in Solomon Islands developed a style of its own, although it (the SIBS) originally owed much to the BBC model of programming structure and content (albeit with, unlike its mentor, limited advertising content). The ability of shortwave radio transmission to reach out to even the remotest of islands and villages in the country has ensured that the current national broadcaster in Solomon Islands (the SIBC) is the key

conveyor of information and news of national and international events. The nation-building capacity of the SIBC is, to this author, one of the most cohesive and invaluable functions of the SIBC, yet its potential in this regard is often not appreciated by politicians. Jourdan (1995) reminds us that nations are made and do not exist naturally. Thus, for many listeners in isolated locations who rarely see Honiara-based officials or have access to Government services, such as health or education, the sound of the National Anthem played over the SIBC and the 'live' broadcasts of Parliamentary proceedings or national sporting events, are often the only reminders that they are citizens of one nation.

Revised models

Radio's unique ability to touch both literate and non-literate listeners alike gives it a powerful enabling capability in a nation such as Solomon Islands. However, in a land where more than 70 languages are spoken, the difficulties in deciding in which languages to broadcast are a constant factor. The use of a *lingua franca* (Pijin) seeks to supersede the issue, but it also denies the linguistic beauty of 'tok ples'[191] and the responsibility of a national broadcaster to nourish traditional languages through their regular transmission, before they die out through either lack of use or being overwhelmed by 'Honiara Pijin'.[192]

The model of broadcasting inherited by most former British colonial territories is the one which was influenced by the BBC managers and trainers seconded to the Empire to establish broadcasting stations. Whether that non-commercial, public service broadcasting paradigm is still current in terms of the specific needs of small, independent nations (where government funding subventions to a national broadcasting organization are limited) is debatable. Even the SIBS, after much discussion, moved to allow advertising in the late 1950s, while the SIBC is heavily reliant on commercial revenue (particularly from programme sponsorships, spot advertising and 'service message' payments) to enable it to meet its public service programming commitments. However, the inflow of commercial revenue is a two-edged sword and it is important that broadcasters are not swayed in their programming decisions and public service responsibilities by corporate wishes or pressures.

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[191] Vernacular.

[192] 'Honiara Pijin' is a derogatory expression for the language as spoken by more educated urban residents. It includes a greater English vocabulary than is evident in the standard Pijin spoken in villages and remote areas.

The actual flow of on-air programming is also open to discussion, as in societies which rely more on oral story telling than reading stories from paper, the structure of language contains its own specificities. For broadcasters in Western societies, where time has a different meaning and is the main constraint, a ticking clock brings restrictions. However, in a society such as Solomon Islands, where the content and culture of the spoken word is more important than the time-space in which it is expected to be delivered, and where time in a village is dictated by sunrise and sunset, not by a clock, a complete overhaul of the very 'sound' of radio could be envisaged.[193] Consideration could be given to a more free-flow form of radio, a narrative where the cadence of language and its expression takes precedence over Western concepts of blocks of programming ringed by time-fences.

Contributions to knowledge

(i) History

The specific problem posed at the outset of this thesis was one of a multi-dimensional nature. As a starting point, the thesis has addressed a range of relevant issues through chronologically documenting the historical development of wireless telegraphy, telephony and radio broadcasting in the BSIP. This research path has not previously been travelled and the thesis now provides the reader with a unique, methodical, socio-political narrative upon which to base future academic research endeavours and policy formulation in such fields as communication for social change, media development and military history in both Solomon Islands and the broader Pacific. An understanding of how and why the most important electronic medium (radio) in the Pacific came about in Solomon Islands, the manner in which its use and impact was manipulated during colonial times, its importance in World War II and its potential as a tool for national cohesion and development are all explored.

In terms of an historical narrative, the thesis places on record unique perspectives and new data not previously published. The first experimental wireless licence issued in the BSIP in 1914 (very early, even by global standards of the new technology) is documented. More extraordinarily, the thesis reveals that the transmission of voice and music through the airwaves (i.e. broadcasting) was first carried out experimentally in the BSIP on the 17th

[193] The late Francis Bugotu, CBE (b.1937-d.1992), educator, Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission and SIG Ambassador to the UN, said that "Melanesian history is not tied to Time" (1968, p. 65).

August, 1923, one year after the first BBC broadcasts in the UK and the licensing of station 2CM in Sydney, Australia, but a full three months before Sydney radio broadcasting station 2SB (later 2BL) began on-air transmissions (Carty, 2011; Griffen-Foley, 2014). By the time 2SB went to air, the wireless station at very remote Roviana in the BSIP was already broadcasting concerts by brass bands and local choirs (in indigenous languages).

In terms of military history, the thesis brings new insights into the use of *Teleradio* equipment by coastwatchers during World War II and also adds to previous unique research carried out by the author into the development of the US military's wartime Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) in the BSIP (Hadlow, 2009). Original photographs from a variety of unpublished sources are included in the thesis to provide a new perspective on personalities and events.

(ii) Policy and regulation

Secondly, the thesis addresses the problem of how and why the colonial authorities allowed wireless, in all its forms, to develop in the BSIP and the reasoning behind the policies and control mechanisms placed on its development by British colonial officials. This subject area has implications for researchers in such fields as cultural, anthropological and communication studies as the thesis provides an insight into officialdom's *modus operandi*, policy formulation and 'thinking' in terms of the public face (i.e. information/propaganda) it presented to those it governed.

The author also contends that, just as the 'digital disruption' of the 21st century has seen new technologies (especially the Internet) often overwhelm existing Government laws and regulations, so the development of wireless in the early 1900s completely confounded colonial administrators. Well-meaning officials in the British Empire's colonial Pacific territories had neither experience in, nor an understanding of, the technical parameters of the medium and the potential implications of the community impact of wireless messages. Even more confronting for a civil servant, there was no existing bureaucratic rule-book on how the new technology should be managed. Further, the colonial authorities found themselves in a maelstrom of commercial firms ('start up' companies akin to today's Silicon Valley entrepreneurs) such as Marconi Telegraph, Telefunken, Poulson, AWA Ltd.,

all of whom were aggressively seeking regional hegemony for their own technical system of wireless.[194]

The one natural instinct of the WPHC bureaucracy was to ensure that complete control of this new technology remained in the hands of the Government. Thus, officials sought to slow-down the process by seeking outside guidance from 'consultants'[195] in how to access and use the technology, while awaiting new bureaucratic instructions on the licensing of wireless to arrive from the 'mother country'. The thesis displays the various King's Regulations and other policies put in place to ensure control. While these were often wartime (World War I) measures, they remained in place into the future, causing frustration to potential wireless users, especially in the commercial sector in the colonies. In the BSIP, for example, planters and traders pleaded for radio broadcasts of business information (copra prices, shipping news etc.) from the first decade of the 1900s and had to wait nearly 30 years to see their dream come to fruition, the essence of Government policy, as shown in this thesis, to be one primarily about control of opportunity, rather than liberalization of process.

(iii) Society and culture

The third aspect of the thesis problem concerns the manner in which the governed (i.e. the indigenous population) was perceived by the colonial regime. This specifically relates to the models put in place for broadcasting and the programming content considered acceptable for 'native' consumption. Modern theorists (Chin, Wilkins, Thomas, Obijiofor, Servaes, Van de Fliert et al) recognise the importance of the media in development (as outlined in this thesis), especially as a participatory process. However, as the officials who first developed early broadcasting in the BSIP (and in other parts of the Pacific) often had no professional or academic background in the field, it is understandable that they imagined the use of radio in a one-way flow context. Combined with the standard paternalistic nature of British colonialism, which perceived the colonialists as teachers and the local population as empty vessels waiting to be filled with the white man's wisdom and

[194] The Betamax/VHS format videotape rivalry of the 1980s/90s and the competitive nature of the Apple/PC computer technologies are modern-day equivalents of competing technical systems.
[195] Such as the Crown Agents in London.

knowledge, there is little wonder that a 'top-down' approach to communication was in place.

Schramm's (1973) 'bullet theory' of injecting information into a society in a (usually) vain attempt to make change would have seemed logical to someone like the Secretary to Government, David Trench, when he decided to introduce a weekly information bulletin ("entirely my brainchild") (Sir David Trench, personal communication, August 8, 1984) on the *Teleradio* network in the BSIP in 1947. As the well-intentioned broadcasts were part of the anti-Maasina Rule, *Operation De-Louse*, effort and as they were in the English language and most of the indigenous population did not have wireless receiving sets, the outcomes to the experiment were to be imagined. In the ensuing international Cold War, the 'bullet theory' approach continued because the policy aim of colonial authorities across the world became not one of positivity in broadcast content, but primarily one which was simply "to prevent other messages getting through" (Katz & Wedell, 1977, p. 15).

(iv) Lessons learned

In the final argument of the thesis problem, the author brings knowledge of a new theoretical perspective and construct to the place of broadcasting in a post-colonial society. Unlike in its colonial period, radio broadcasting in an independent Solomon Islands has been one in which the reliance is on self-determination, local staffing and a more inclusive programming style which embraces communities and cultures from across the nation.

The usual theories of Western academics contend that newly independent countries invariably follow the same path, that of controlling and censoring their own media in a harsher manner than during the colonial period itself because "control of the media is seen as essential for the achievement of the integration goals" (Katz & Wedell, 1977, p. 35). Another more sanguine view was that "the BBC clones[196] left behind were seized by Westernized elites taking control in these emergent states" (Louw, 2001, p. 76), thus allowing radio broadcasting content and output to become controlled by the State.

[196] State-controlled broadcasting organizations loosely modelled on BBC principles.

This thesis turns the tables on these concepts in that Solomon Islands took an opposite path, one which has proved to be unique amongst the small Pacific island nations. Rather than seeking to control the media, the political elite (i.e. the Chief Minister Solomon Mamaloni) actively sought for the Government-controlled broadcaster (SIBS) to be transformed into an independent entity (SIBC). His attempts (see Preface) to introduce a more democratic law were worked against by the out-going colonial authorities and only his perseverance saw the new nation have its own independent, national public broadcasting service.

The over-riding message from this thesis on the topic of freedom of expression, especially for repressive Governments in the 21st century, is clear, namely that legislators in colonial and closed societies should not fear following the example of a small, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation, Solomon Islands, in opening the airwaves to independent local voices. During a recent period of armed insurrection and national civil crisis (Moore, 2004) in Solomon Islands, the SIBC continued to provide a daily service of inestimable national social, cultural and cohesive importance. Despite intense pressure from militants and threats of violence which caused some journalists (e.g. Seke, Angiki) to have to leave the country for their own safety, the SIBC remained neutral and loyal to its public service broadcasting roots. The example of Solomon Islands is one which many nations could well emulate.

Final thoughts

The life of an expatriate is one which forever touches those who choose to live beyond the shores of their own home country. It is an ambiguous existence, guided partly by the desire of the expatriate to contribute in a meaningful way to the place where they are living, but always cognisant of the fact that they are a 'stranger' in the land of another. They can never truly know or understand the cultural milieu in which they are placed, no matter their commitment or knowledge.

When the first broadcast of the SIBS went to air on the 23rd September, 1952 the opening programme featured speeches from officials, followed by some Solomon Islands 'string band'[197] music played by William (Billy) Bennett's local group. The two-hour session also

[197] 'Strings bands' are groups of guitar players and singers playing locally composed songs. Very popular in Solomon Islands.

included dance records and Western classical music. However, the feature item was half an hour of music from “South Pacific”, the American-written musical show which used James Michener’s fictional wartime stories of the South Seas to idealise the Pacific as a place of romance, carefree and languid lifestyles, love affairs, tropical skies and happy local populations.

One can only imagine the reaction of listeners (both expatriate and indigenous) in remote reaches of the Protectorate, perspiring profusely in the humid evening air, mosquitoes providing an incessant chorus, as their battery wireless sets brought them an idyllic, Hollywood interpretation of the very jungle and bush which surrounded them. As the last “South Pacific” tune in the SIBS selection (Script for the opening broadcast of the SIBS, September 23, 1952), *I’m Gonna Wash that Man Right Outa my Hair*, rang out across the stillness of the tropical Solomon Islands night, perhaps indigenous Solomon Islanders, who were resigned to the strange goings-on of the expatriate colonials (‘pasin blong masta’)[198] thought of it as just another surreal day in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.

By the glow of kerosene lanterns, expatriate listeners, their notions of the Pacific being seen through a totally different social and cultural prism to that of those they governed, possibly paused, gin and tonic in hand, to ponder about life imitating art, or *vice versa*. For those British colonial administrators hoping for the best in delaying BSIP nationhood and clinging both to the last vestiges of empire and a fast disappearing colonial career and lifestyle, a more appropriate song from the “South Pacific” musical for the first transmission from the SIBS may well have been *A Cockeyed Optimist* (“South Pacific”, Rodgers & Hammerstein, 1949).

[198] Pijin for (literally) “Way [fashion] of the white man”.

EPILOGUE

The weekly Sunday morning broadcasts over the *Teleradio* network in the BSIP continued for another five years with Kay Poole, Ron Calvert and William 'Billy' Bennett still at the helm.

In the early 1950s, the Administration decided to establish a fully-fledged national broadcasting service. As the Government could not afford to purchase a new transmitter, Ron Calvert found a discarded American wartime radio beacon near Henderson Field and converted it for use (R. Calvert, personal communication, 1984). This enabled station VQO Honiara of the new Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBS) to be officially opened on the 23rd September, 1952. It broadcast on a frequency of 1030 kc/s mediumwave with a power of 400 watts. The SIBS continued until 1976, when it became a public service broadcasting corporation (SIBC).

David Trench left the Protectorate in 1948 before taking up an assignment with the colonial government in Hong Kong. He was later knighted (KCMG) and returned to the BSIP as High Commissioner for the Western Pacific and Governor of the BSIP from 1960-64, before going back to Hong Kong as Governor of the British Crown Colony. He passed away in 1988.

Kay Poole remained as Information Officer with the BSIP Administration and continued her part-time involvement with the SIBS until 1966 when she retired and was awarded an MBE. She enjoyed a quiet retirement in Australia before her death in 1983.

William 'Billy' Bennett MM joined the SIBS as an Assistant Programme Officer in 1952. He was later sent to the UK on a BBC training course and remained with the SIBS as its most popular and well-known voice for many years. He was awarded an MBE and, in his retirement, became Chairman of the Board of the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC). He passed away in 1988.

Ron Calvert, whose substantive role was as CWO handling all radio communications in the BSIP, carried out his weekly Sunday morning broadcast duties from 1947 to 1952, when he was offered the new post of Broadcasting Officer to manage and develop the SIBS. He retired in 1962, but returned to Honiara a year later and managed VQO until a

replacement was found in 1965. He then resumed his retirement in Australia, where he died in 1988.

Figure 33: Sir David Trench.

David (later Sir David) Trench, Secretary to Government and initiator of post-war broadcasts in the BSIP.

[Credit: Government Information Service]

Figure 34: William 'Billy' Bennett.

'William 'Billy' Bennett, coastwatcher, radio operator and announcer with the weekly Teleradio network broadcasts.

[Credit: Calvert family collection]

Figure 35: Katharine (Kay) Poole.

Katharine (Kay) Poole, announcer and editor of the early broadcasts presented on the Teleradio network after World War II.

[Credit: Sally Smith family collection]

Figure 36: Ron Calvert

Ron Calvert, Chief Wireless Operator and, later, Officer-in-Charge of the SIBS, was a pioneer with the Teleradio network broadcasts in 1947.

[Credit: Calvert family collection]

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